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F1 RACING
• NEED FOR SPEED:
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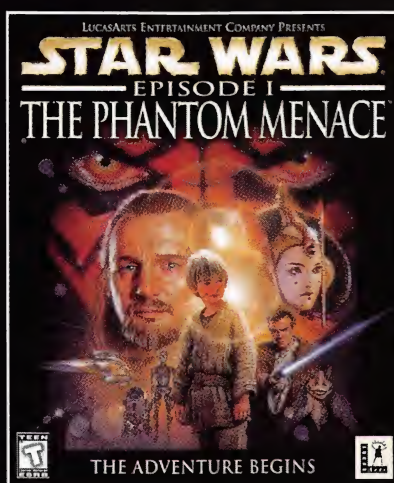
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As the central character, you will journey to all the stunning locations of Episode I, where you are destined to play a decisive role in every key event.

All-consuming? Yes. But then, there's no such thing as a part-time Jedi.



www.lucasarts.com/products/phantommenace

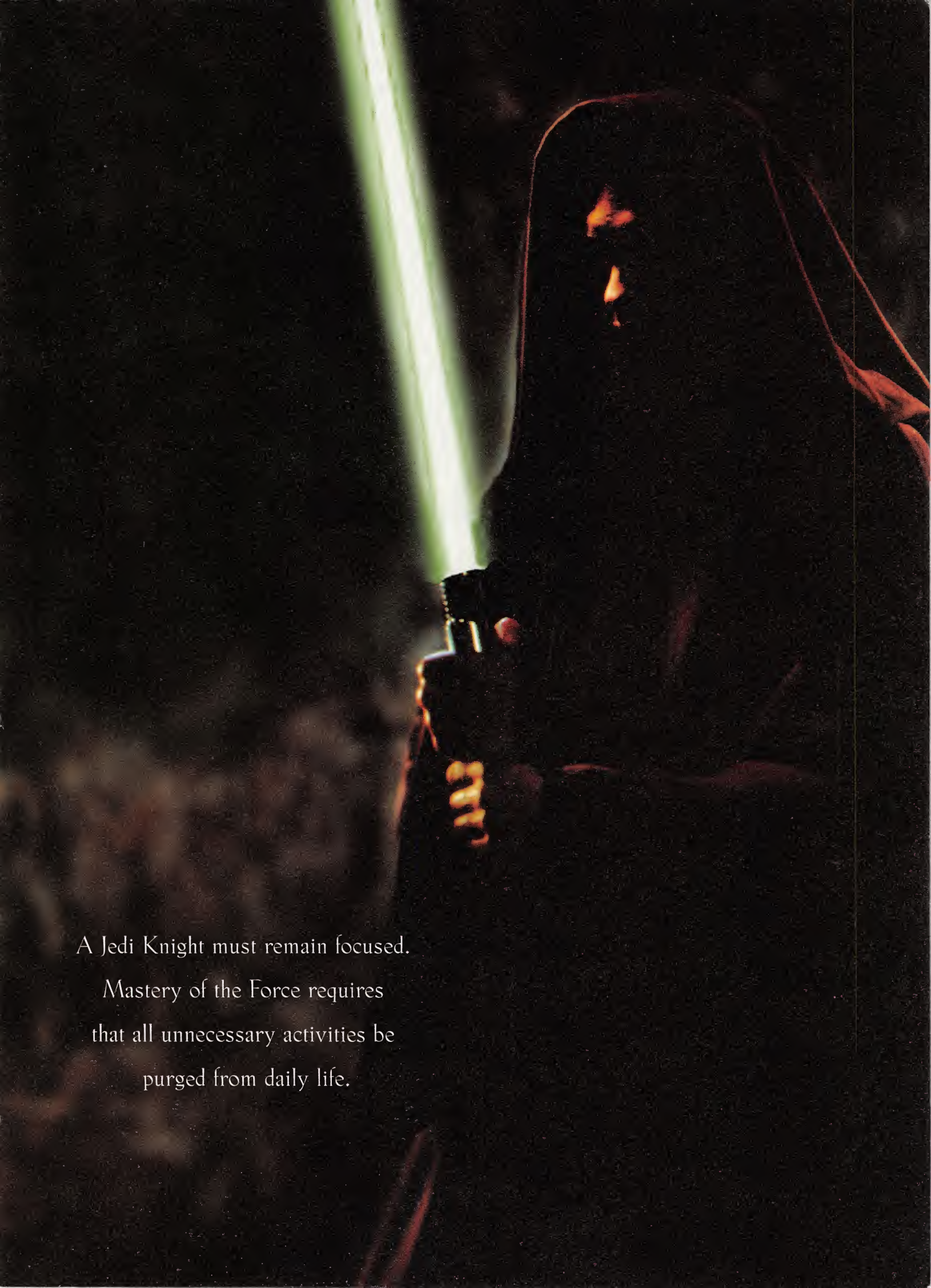
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- Extensive arsenal of weapons and high-tech gadgets.
- Dynamic camera angles react intuitively to each situation with 1st and 3rd person perspective.
- Original musical score by the Moscow Symphony Orchestra



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The only thing in the universe more desirable than a PCPP subscription is a Diamond Viper 770 Ultra TNT2. Buy one and maybe win the other right here!

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E3 REPORT

How many of the 2000 new games on show did the team manage to see for more than 5 seconds? Gaming's Greatest Year is upon us kids!



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Look! New bit! We embrace change but aren't afraid of the past. Each month we'll look back at a recent, but not too old, game and bask in its beauty, which may have not been immediately apparent at review time.

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Remember the incredible impact Descent had when it first arrived? No? We do, here's the take...

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Turn traditional thinking on its ear.

Today, regardless of the PC brand you choose, the most important component is not the computer. It's the monitor. Yesterday, the hot phrase was "Monitor Sold Separately." Today, it's "PC Sold Separately." Technology blurs the lines between one computer and another. They're all fast, all loaded, all pretty much the same.

What's different, what's exciting is happening in displays - multimedia monitors with built-in teleconferencing capabilities and monitors with short depth technology that will save you a lot of space.

ViewSonic PS775 is a real space saver with a footprint comparable to most 14" (various viewable) monitors. With spectacular specs like 0.22mm horizontal dot pitch, a resolution of 1280 x 1024 at 90 Hz flicker-free refresh rate and SuperClear™ screen technology, it provides high-contrast, strong, bright color images. With the USB hub base, it allows users to incorporate up to four additional USB compliant peripherals for multimedia.

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(PC Sold Separately)



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What we're playing:

Ben: Homeworld, Heroes III, TOCA 2, B-52s
March: Ep 1 Racer, AvP, silly buggers, Pavement
David: Super Drop-Zone, Discworld Noir,
Thief, Suede
Malcolm: Ep 1 Racer, Metal Gear Solid, Kate
Bush, Aphex Twin.

Doing E3

Another year, another E3, another mountain of unbelievable games and another week of that utterly draining fatigue which only E3 can impose.

The Los Angeles Convention Center is a collection of massive halls (how many? Who really knows...) approximately the size of an Australian suburb. Inside the Convention Center are 2000 brand new, largely never seen before games, most of which draw attention to themselves via 3 storey-high subwoofer stacks and a lightshow that puts Sydney Harbour on New Year's Eve to shame.

Arriving jetlagged and rooted from the previous week's deadline, one is overcome by the endless myriad of cool stuff to see and play with. One then spends 3 days at a fast trot, spending an average of 10 minutes getting the 'show'n'tell' by, hopefully, a real live developer, but more often a clueless by well meaning Marketing Type.

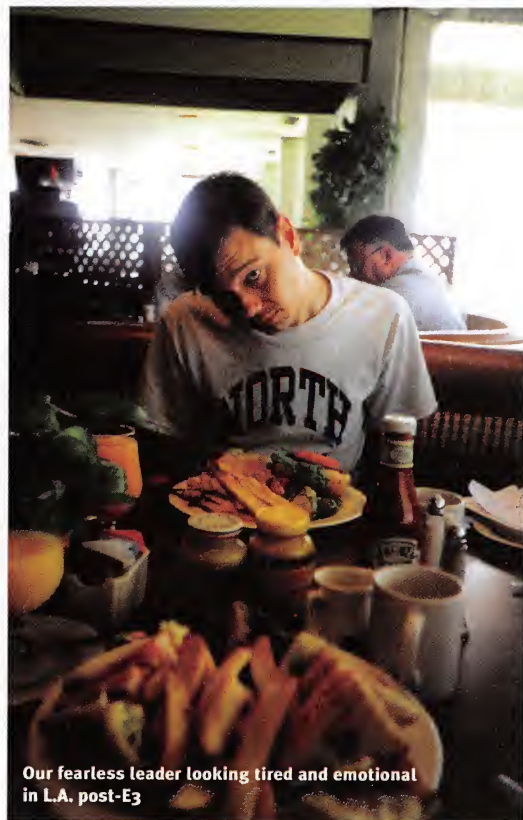
Press kits and screenshot CDs are accumulated through the day. Press kit science has apexed - these apparently flimsy sheafs of paper now have the curious physical property of increasing their weight by an order of magnitude as each hour passes.

There is no food to eat, according to our familiarity with what is 'food'. There is Coca Cola though, and one tends to consume the equivalent of one's bodyweight of the stuff each hour.

Wandering glassy-eyed around the show are 80,000 'attendees'. These comprise retailers, distributors, developers, publishers and media. That list is ordered according to how fast they move at E3, from slowest to fastest. Everyone has a personal E3 dogtag hung about their neck, with Media tags featuring the all-powerful orange ribbon stuck to it. This wee strip of satin has mystical ocean-parting properties - want to see a cool game buried behind a 10-deep crowd? Just wave the ribbon in the air and within seconds a PR representative bursts forth through the mass, leading you gently through to meet the developers in a comfy backroom, and wondering if we'd like a Coke...

During the evenings, we media types gather together, while being saturated with foul American 'beer' at some swish publisher party, and discuss what we saw that day. It's a helpful time, the bigger picture emerges and by next morning one is ready to hit the show again with certain games prioritised for a long second look.

Then, at the end of Day 3, abruptly, it all stops dead. Klaxons sound, security guards appear en masse and we



all make good our escape. Being in the US though, we advantage ourselves of the location and force our way into American game developers for an extended look-see. I went off to check out Epic (Unreal Tournament), while Dep Ed March hit Interplay for the big tour.

And that, dear readers, is how one does E3. The end results are in these very pages in our superfabulous E3 Report. Of course, there's no way in the universe we could cram every game into this issue and give it fair coverage, so be sure to watch our previews section in the coming months for the concentrated juice on the games you'll be drooling over through to Xmas.

In the meantime, a Berocca and a liedown is in order I believe...

Ben Mansill
Editor



CD GUIDE

The original dose of Gaming Goodness™. Beware of Imitations

CD #39

Starting the PC PowerPlay CD

Welcome to the PCPowerPlay double cover CD. We have included all the popular programs to make the most of your PC. Using the CD is easy. Simply insert the CD into your CDROM drive and it should automatically bring up the Menu interface. (If not, don't panic, just click on the RUNME.BAT file to manually install the program).

Once the menu is up, you can navigate the screens using your mouse. Click on the category of your choice (eg Education, Fun, Games, etc..) to begin. Have a look at the programs, and if you see something you like to try out, just click on it. Depending on your choice, the program will either install itself to the hard drive or run straight off the CD.

cdtech@powerplay.next.com.au

Faulty CDs will be replaced free of charge. Send it, together with a description of the error, to:

PC PowerPlay CD Returns

Reply Paid 634

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Redfern NSW 2016 (No postage required)

The Games

Hidden & Dangerous



Publisher: Take 2 Interactive

Genre: Real Time Strategy

Hidden & Dangerous is an action/real-time strategic game, containing a combination of non-traditional features, elements of real time strategy, action games and partly tactical strategies. Plentiful new features and stunning true 3D graphics give the game original form and dynamic pace. The story is imaginative and full of reversals and forces the player to think ahead all the time.

Hidden & Dangerous takes place during World War II. The story begins in 1941 and, provided that you choose the correct course of action, you can get to the end of the war in 1945. Player's task is to lead a small group of Allies soldiers (up to 4 people) who carry-out difficult missions deep in enemy territory. Missions take place in six different localities.

Need: P200, 32 MB, SVGA 2MB

Want: P266, 64 MB, 3D Card





Confirmed Kill

Publisher: Eidos Interactive
Genre: Flight Simulation
 When the United States first clashed with the Japanese Empire in the early confrontations of the Pacific Theatre, two aircraft were destined to clash. These were the fighters of the navies - the Japanese A6M Zero

and the Grumman F4F Wildcat. The Americans built a better aircraft the Hellcat. This game offers hard-core simulation fans uncompromised realism and attention to detail and a wide range of historically based missions and hypothetical scenarios.
Need: P2-200, 32MB, 3D Card
Want: P2-266, 64MB, 3D Card



Corsairs

Publisher: Microids
Genre: Strategy (Real Time)
 You are a seaworthy Corsair devoted to his nation! Control the actions of up to 30 of your men in real time. You sail off to conquer the new



world! Overcome hordes of Pirates! Improve buildings such as the lighthouse to see enemies further away.

Need: P200, 32MB, SVGA
Want: P233, 64MB, SVGA 4MB



MICROSOFT BASEBALL 2000

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Sports - Baseball

Time to "Step up to the plate!" All the teams, stadiums, and players, officially licensed from the MLBPA and Major League Baseball, are just waiting to take to the diamond and knock one out of the park. Pick your favourite team and go for the pennant with Baseball 2000's intuitive and easy-to-learn gameplay, user-friendly artificial intelligence, and realistic sights and sounds. Be prepared for extra innings because with Baseball 2000, you'll be able "Play Ball!" right into the next millennium.

The trial version of Baseball 2000 takes players out to Fenway Park for a day game between the National League All-Stars and the American League All-Stars. Baseball fans can enjoy two innings with all of the difficulty levels, computer-assist options, defensive positioning options, performance, and game setting options of the full version. Players get access to all bat types, including basic, intermediate and advanced; as well as rookie, veteran and All Star difficulty levels.

Need: P166, 32MB, SVGA
Want: P200, 64MB, 3D Card





Expendable

Publisher: Rage Software

Genre: 3D Shooter

You play a space marine who is dropped in to a series of unfamiliar alien worlds to fight for the survival of your race with a huge arsenal of apocalyptic weapons at your disposal. The



ability of the game engine to freely mix outdoor and indoor environments (such as tunnels, underground bases, ruined cities etc.) creates a beautiful world for the player to explore and destroy!

Need: P100, 16MB, SVGA

Want: P200, 32MB, 3D Card



OFFICIAL FORMULA 1 RACING

Publisher: Eidos Interactive

Genre: Driving Simulator

Can you imagine the adrenaline rush that your body must experience? Not to mention the incredible noise and feeling of the wind as it rushes past you? At last your imagination is about to become a reality. Official Formula One Racing is the combination of months of research, planning and testing and it represents the epitome and spirit of Formula One. It is one of the select few games to carry the prestigious FIA License.

Test your skills in 5 laps on the Japanese Circuit. All 22 official cars and 11 teams from the 1998 Formula 1 World Championship are represented with 3 difficulty modes. Choose from a super realistic simulation mode, or jump in for wheel gripping, tyre screeching action of arcade mode.

Need: P133, 16MB, SVGA 2MB

Want: P200, 32MB, 3D Card



NEED FOR SPEED: HIGH STAKES

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Genre: Driving Simulator

Recreated through close collaborations with the world's most renowned car manufacturers, NFS: High Stakes brings you a dream collection waiting to be unleashed on the open road. Speed has its consequences so weigh the risks carefully. Carelessness results in costly damage and flagrant disregard for the law results in strict enforcement from the Highway patrol. You can also choose to uphold the law behind the wheel of high-speed Police cruisers. Prepare for the ultimate driving experience.

Need: P200, 32MB, SVGA

Want: P266, 64MB, 3D Card



Road Wars

Publisher: Intense Entertainment

Genre: Driving Simulator

Road Wars is a cutting-edge vehicular combat racing game set in a police state of the near future where the extreme sport of Road Wars has emerged. With twelve different characters, car, and track combinations, and a plethora of hazard effects, Road Wars is designed to satisfy the craving of the worst adrenaline junkies. Setting itself apart from the competition, Road Wars features the Season Race,

where players win money from each race and are challenged to repair and add weapons, armour, and tyres to their vehicles from race to race. Road Wars also features single and pulse-pounding multi-player modes, realistic weapon and car physics, 3D dynamics, force feed back, EAX, 3DNow, and DirectX 6.0 support, Road Wars is surely to immerse players in the role of a road warrior.

Need: P166, 16MB, SVGA

Want: P200, 32MB, SVGA





Space Bunnies Must Die

Publisher: Ripcord Games

Genre: Adventure

You play Allison Huxter, a truck-stop waitress who must battle the evil horde of Bunnies in order to rescue your kidnapped sister. There are several things you must do in order to rescue her. Each of the game's levels contains a jewel encrusted carrot-sceptre which is guarded by the level boss. You need all of the sceptres in order to unlock Lotar's Level and find your sister. Your goal in this demo level is to find and secure its sceptre.

Need: P200, 32MB, SVGA

Want: P233, 64MB, 3D Card

The 4th Coming

Publisher: AR Internet

Genre: Online RPG

Just arrived in Australia, The 4th Coming is a Multi-player Online Role Playing Game playable on Windows 95/98/NT via the internet. The 4th Coming is a game with a Diablo and Ultima Online flavour with an emphasis on action so new players can start enjoying the game without a long setup period.

While many internet playable games allow only 4-8 players, T4C features up to 100 players at a time interacting in the same 80,000,000 square foot world. This world called Althea has detailed towns, treacherous dungeons, untamed wilderness and multiple islands with their own unique character.

The central game server also allows for a world where your character is stored for safe keeping at the server location when you logoff and periodically during play. This feature allows you to advance in skill & levels day by day and lets you become part of the online community.

The 4th Coming has a server

located here in Australia now. Having the server in Australia is of great benefit to local players as it improves the responsiveness between the server and the players desktop computer.

Pricing for access to The 4th Coming starts at \$16.95 per month for those using their own Internet Access accounts. A.R. Internet are providing special T4C access accounts in Sydney at the discount price of \$47.95 including Unlimited login time per day to both the T4C game server and for general internet access.

For more information please call (02) 9809 5333 or 1800-000-890, Fax (02) 9809-9199 Email: games@ar.com.au

Need: P200, 32MB, SVGA, Internet connection

Turok 2

Publisher: Acclaim

Genre: 1st Person Shooter

Having defeated the Campaigner in the original Turok: Dinosaur Hunter, Turok attempts to destroy the Chronoceptor by throwing it into a volcano. In doing so, Turok unwittingly awakens an even more deadly foe-The Primagen-who lies imprisoned in a spacecraft buried at the core of the lost land. Turok must stop the Primagen from escaping his prison and breaking through the wall dividing the nether world from Earth!

The demo version fully supports Gamespy Lite (play in one multi-player Rok Match level over the Internet with other demo downloaders - buy the game and play on over 30 levels in any of five game modes!) and offers gamers a chance to sample the hardcore weaponry, a single and a multi-player level.

Need: P200, 32MB, SVGA

Want: P2-233, 64MB, 3D Card



Virtual Deep Sea Fishing

Publisher: Interplay Sports

Genre: Fishing

Virtual Deep Sea Fishing lets you angle the world's biggest game fish in a beautiful, action-oriented, real-time 3D environment. Go after

18 varieties of saltwater game fish in 13 exotic locations using your mouse to reel in your trophy as it twists and



turns on your line in the ultimate battle.

Need: P133, 16MB, SVGA

Want: P200, 32MB, 3D Card



Utilities & Patches

AudioCatalyst

AudioCatalyst is a CD ripper and audio encoder based on the ever popular Audiograbber and XingMP3 Encoder. Features include CDDA support, the option to save as either a WAV or MP3 file with or without the intermediary WAV file, definable encoding start and stop times for partial encoding of audio tracks, normalization for automatic correction of recording volume, support for multiple data rates, a checksum utility for file verification, sampling up to 20 KHz, and variable bit rate encoding.

Cakewalk Home Studio

Cakewalk Home Studio is sound software for the home complete with online tutorials, 30 song files, and the ability to record music with an instrument, vocals, or the Virtual Piano. Users can cut, copy, paste, mix, and play up to four tracks and print sheet music. Features include the Console View, a single window from which users can arm and record tracks, apply processing effects, create submixes, and automate volume and panning levels in real time; multi-track digital audio for recording and playing up to four audio tracks in synchronization with MIDI; support for DirectX audio plug-ins; and the ability to save music directly to RealNetworks' RealMedia file format for streaming audio and MIDI over the Internet.

DromEd: Thief Mission Editor

DromEd: Thief Mission Editor allows users to construct new 3D-level maps with corridors, open areas, and so on, and draw from a library of objects and textures to create unique Thief: The Dark Project missions. Looking Glass also plans to post downloadable versions of the original missions online, allowing players to edit and customize existing Thief missions.

DropChute Pro

DropChute Pro is a new breed of software that lets users exchange files with one another instantly through secure, real-time PC-to-PC connections through the Internet, intranets, or direct-dialed calls. Simply drag files from any Windows folder and drop them on the icon that represents the person. If the other person is there, you can initiate a chat session during file delivery. You can even choose an animated character to speak aloud the chat messages you receive from others.

GameSpy

GameSpy is a tool for Internet gaming that allows you to get server listings from anywhere on the Internet. Players of multiplayer Quake, QuakeWorld, Quake II, Shogo, Sin, Blood 2, Hexen II, Heretic II, Unreal, and Half-Life can use GameSpy to

Game Commander

Game Commander allows players to use voice commands in place of a game's normal keyboard commands. Want your troops to attack? Just say, "Attack!" It is speaker-independent (no voice training required) and includes command templates for many of the popular games. You can easily create your own command templates for your favourite games, download additional ones from the Game Commander Web site, or even share them with your friends.

find lots of servers for multiplayer play. It provides detailed information for each server and can launch games and connect you to the server you want to join. GameSpy also can join the Internet game you specify and offers many other cool features.

Photo Line

Photo Line is a 32 bit application with outstanding professional quality features. This editor supports plug-in filters, animation, layering, scanner inputs, just about every feature you can think of. Fully functional demo version has 30 trial period, well worth checking out.

Ps2rate

Ps2rate PS/2 mouse sampling rate changer for Windows 95/98. The problem with ps2 mice is that Windows samples them at 40Hz. This means that if your screen is refreshing at anything above 40Hz then mouse control will feel incredibly jittery and inaccurate without special filtering. The Qizmo team have come up with a cool fix for this which benefits mouse control in all games and even in Windows itself. The ps2rate program will actually force Windows to sample the mouse at a higher rate and so benefits all mouse usage directly. A must-get for any serious gamer!

Scrollworks Cascader

Scrollworks Cascader lets you access applets in your Control Panel, addresses in your Favorites list, and shortcuts on your Desktop from the Windows Start Menu. Normally, if you wish to access an item in any of these special "shell" folders, you must click through several menus and hunt for the icon in an Explorer window. With Scrollworks Cascader, you can access these items from cascading menus that can be placed anywhere in your Start Menu.



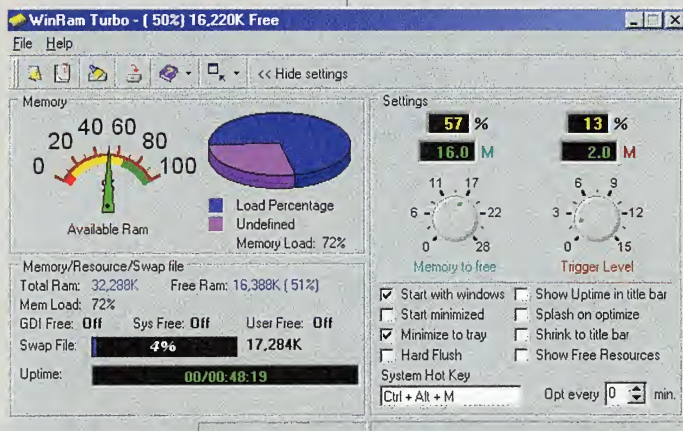
This makes it a snap to access Control Panel applets, items under "My Computer", Desktop items, Printers, Internet addresses in your Favorites and History folders, "Network Neighbourhood" icons, Fonts, Cookies, recently opened files, and files and folders in your "My Documents" special folder.

Sonique

Sonique is an audio player capable of handling MP3 files, Microsoft Windows Media files, audio CDs, and more. It features a dynamic, windowless interface, complete with fully animated menu systems. Additional functionality includes a full-featured playlist editor, a variety of unique output visualization modes, plug-ins, a robust control set featuring pitch, jog and shuttle, a balance and amplification adjustment, as well as a 20-band equalizer with spline-based level adjustment.

Ulead VideoStudio

Ulead VideoStudio is a software video editor for the PC. Built around an intuitive interface, VideoStudio allows you to transform long, boring videotapes into great home movies. You can add titles and rolling credits, transitions, narration, and background music.



WinRamTurbo

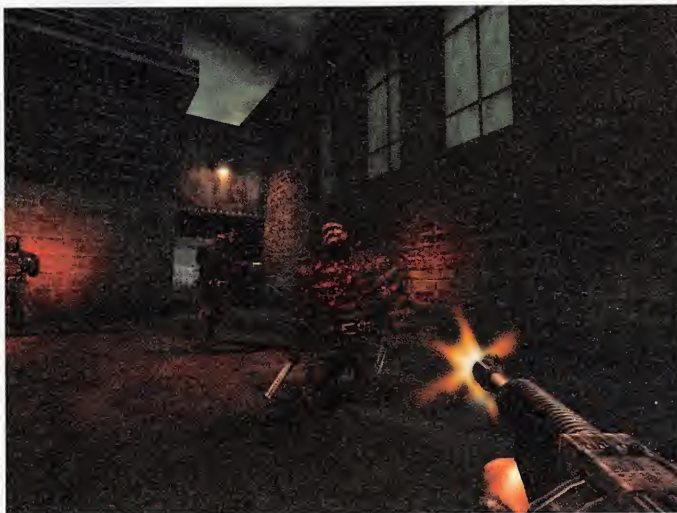
A powerful and easy to use memory optimizer utility combining a Memory Optimizer, a File & Disk Cache Optimizer plus a Windows Performance Booster all into one package! This application helps you to take charge of your memory, reclaim fragmented and idle memory. Users can tweak their systems to achieve a better overall performance than without this program!

Govt. moves to toughen games classification

For obvious reasons, the review and classification of all forms of entertainment media is under the spotlight at the moment. Thus, it comes as no surprise to learn that the present operation of the Office of Film and Literature Classification is subject to amendment. Of particular interest to the gaming community are the proposed legislative changes that effect the OFLC's handling of computer games. From what we have seen, many of these changes would seem to indicate a tougher, more stringent examination of each game under classification. Applicants will now be obliged to include all contentious material to be found in the game when presenting the game to the review board. In addition, the definition of what constitutes so-called "contentious material" has been altered, significantly increasing the amount of such material likely to be fall into the category. Elsewhere, some rather peculiar amendments have been offered in terms of what defines a computer game and what defines a film.

Many of the amendments are quite vague and open to interpretation. Especially concerning to us is a statement found in Item 20 Subsection 28, which says: "With an increasing number of recordings containing computer generated images which allow some degree of interactivity, the Board has been receiving some applications for classification of computer games which, in its view, are more appropriately dealt with as film. The proposed provision will enable the Board to address this problem."

Also, one striking (yet utterly predictable) omission is any reference to the introduction of an 'R' classification for computer games. In fact, Item 3 Section 5 requests that the current definition of "contentious material" be repealed and apply to anything that would warrant an 'M' rating instead of an 'MA' rating.



In brief, some of the more noteworthy proposals are as follows. The proposed amendments will:

- * require that a copy of the computer game be lodged with the application for classification of that computer game.

- * insert a new provision providing the Board with a discretionary power to decline to deal with an application for classification of a computer game if, in the opinion of the Board, it is more appropriately dealt with as a film.

- * allow an application for the classification of a computer game to include particulars of any contentious material in the game and of the means by which access to that material may be gained.

- * insert a new provision enabling the Director to call in a publication, film or computer game for reclassification.

- * amend the definition of contentious material to include the material that would be likely to result in a 'M' or higher classification.

Bear in mind that these are merely proposals at this stage. Before they come into effect, they must be endorsed and passed through parliament. To this end, the proposed amendments have been released for consultation with the industry and any interested persons.

SIDELINES

Finished *Might & Magic VII* yet? No? Well, you'd better hurry up if you're planning on purchasing the first *Heroes of Might & Magic 3* expansion pack. Due for release soon, it will feature an extra six campaigns that follow on from the conclusion of *MM7*. So, if you don't wish to know that, for instance, Archibald is defeated at the end of *MM7* or that his allies subsequently band together inside the Forge where they have accumulated an anachronous assortment of super hi-tech robots and gadgets in an effort to conquer *Erathia* once and for all, then you'd better stop reading now. The *HOMM3* expansion will be called *Armageddon's Blade* and includes a new town (the Forge) boasting its own hero types and new range of troops and a whole bunch of stand-alone and multiplayer maps.



SIDELINES

In addition to the surprise announcement at E3 regarding Thief 2, Eidos have confirmed that the original Dark Project will be re-released in the coming months. Under the guise of Thief Gold, the new version has slipped in three extra missions to its shadowy collection. Apparently, these new tales flesh out some of the more obscure regions of the Thief world and storyline. A thieves' guild, a mage's tower and an as-yet-undisclosed location form the scenarios for the missions. While the re-release is aimed at the Thief novice, veteran blaggards have another reason to keep the game on their hard drives - the Thief level editor is now available for download. Complex it may be, but with the expectation of plenty of smartly-designed missions from Thief fans worldwide we're grateful for Looking Glass' generosity.

In a move that ought to benefit both PC and console gamers, Microsoft and Konami have announced a licensing agreement to publish each other's titles on new formats. While Playstation, N64 and Dreamcast owners may soon thrill to the likes of Age Of Empires or Flight Simulator, more excitingly the joint venture could well herald the arrival of several classic console titles on the PC. Metal Gear Solid, Silent Hill and the Castlevania and International Superstar Soccer series' are the hopeful candidates we're most keen on seeing converted.

Further excellent news on console to PC conversions with Tenchu 2 set to appear on PC before the end of the year, courtesy of Activision. Released only on the Playstation late last year, the original Tenchu, subtitled Stealth Assassins, was a superb action/adventure that placed a strong emphasis on sneaking around and strategically planning any prospective combat. Like the first game, the action of the sequel takes place in Japan, but this time the player will have the choice of three ninjas with varying skills and weapons. Complementing the main Story mode is a Custom mode that allows the creation of new levels, operating like a level editor, presumably.

For all the Sid Meier fans out there, we would dearly love to tell you something definitive about the man's next game for Firaxis. Sadly, the only news we've heard recently is that development has commenced on Civilization 3. On the subject of things Sid-related, there's a new scenario available for Alpha Centauri entitled Fight for the Boreholes. An alien artifact called the Borehole Cluster is the centre of attention, providing a rich source of minerals and energy. Check out www.alphacentauri.com to get your own hands on this special freebie.

Shades of grey

Games marketing tends to adhere to a few predictable routines - take your pick from blood, assorted violence, scantily-clad girls, or high-tech nonsense. Tried and true is the marketing maxim when it comes to gaming. Thus, it's remarkable to hear of someone pursuing a rather different avenue. Lionhead, developers of Black & White, are contemplating the unique strategy of releasing two versions of the same game - one in a black box, the other white. The plan is for the white box to cost extra, but for these additional proceeds to go to charity. With the relationship between good and evil being the major theme in Black & White, Lionhead founder Peter Molyneux thought it would be in keeping with the spirit to force gamers to make a "good versus bad decision before you even play the game". Moral dilemmas in a computer game - who would have thought it?



NewsWire UK

Steve Boxer

Among the Brits, the E3 casualty count reads thus: no deaths (by some sort of miracle), but one UK journalist who shall remain nameless apparently got into a football-related fight in one of Santa Monica's many British pubs, was arrested and deported and sacked for good measure when he returned, tired and emotional, to the UK. As a collective force, we Brits would claim to have outdone all comers at E3 in terms of general outrageousness, and only now are certain individuals returning to normal after a protracted drying-out period. Hurrah for LA. And let's hope none of us ever have to go to Atlanta again...

The most welcome comeback at E3 was without a doubt the resurfacing of the long-lost Bitmap Brothers, of Xenon 2 and Speedball fame. Head honcho Mike Montgomery and his cohorts are working on Z2 - due to be published by GT Interactive in early 2000 - as well as an updated Speedball 2100 for Playstation and Game Boy. You may recall that the original Z, the early RTS with a sense of humour, flopped rather badly, at least in part due to publisher hassles, as well as a painfully long development period. Montgomery will say little about its successor, other than that it will be more strategy-oriented than arcade-like in feel.

Another company which was huge during the Bitmap Brothers' heyday, Sensible Software, has been in the news - because it has been snapped up

Soul ch-ch-ch-changes for Bowie

You may have heard elsewhere this month that David Bowie is to star in his own game.

What you may not know is



what this actually means. Despite what you may have read, Bowie has certainly not designed nor created a game. For a start, the game in question, Omikron: The Nomad Soul, has been in development for several years now, well before a certain Thin White Duke became involved in the process.

Apparently, when Paris-based developer Quantic Dream asked Bowie to contribute some music to the game, the relationship went so well that he wrote the entire soundtrack. Later, he was offered the chance to feature in the game itself as a rock star called Boz. Though the role is only a minor one, Boz and his band will be performing at a location in the game.

Commenting on his involvement with Quantic Dream, Bowie said, "For me, the idea of producing a soundtrack for anything involved with computer entertainment was a real magnet. Very rarely is original music actually produced for a game. But we spent quite some time in Paris working with the team developing the game. We got to know what the game was about; we got to know some of the characters. Omikron is going to be fantastic."

Omikron is scheduled for release through Eidos at the end of this year.



by Codemasters. Presumably this means we can expect a football game from the sports-sim masters. Whether it will owe anything to the old classic Sensible Soccer, however, remains to be seen. Speaking of acquisitions, French publisher Ubi Soft has bought the ailing Interactive Magic, whose Shadow Company (developed in Eastern Europe) has been keeping us amused recently.

Take 2 Interactive's Grand Theft Auto: London 1969 has created a stir by being the first add-on pack to top the all-format charts. Meanwhile, Take 2 demoed GTA 2 behind closed doors at E3, and it looked mighty impressive. The game will keep its top-down perspective (although its graphics are considerably cleaner than those of the original), but will place more of an emphasis on longer, more complex missions. Plus, it will feature a number of gangs (including the dreaded Hare Krishnas). If you start cosying up with some of them and fancy a break from missions, you'll be able to gather points by eliminating members of rival gangs. But watch out for improved AI - angry mobs will come looking for you.

NewsWire

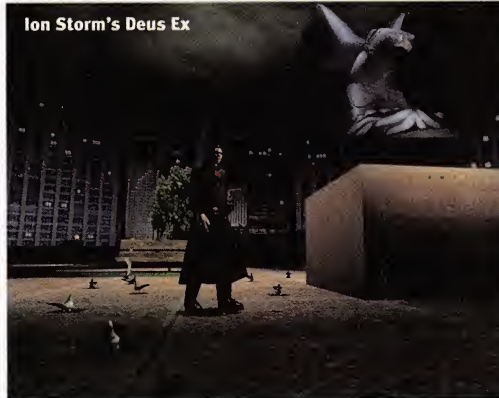
US

Don St John

There are a million stories in the temporary Naked City that is E3, and here's one of them: On a visit to GT Interactive's booth, I was talking with their value game people (the ones who bestowed Deer Hunter on a grateful world) and they mentioned that they had a KISS trivia game coming up later this year. Now, while I'm not a huge fan of makeup-driven, C-grade hard rock, I did want to see if my years of close proximity to fanatic members of the KISS Army had rubbed off.

So later that day, I swung by the booth to check it out... and standing there, sans makeup, was Gene Simmons—the fire-spewing, lizard-tongued bassist and mastermind of KISS himself. And a bunch of GT guys. I couldn't resist this, so I walked over to check out the scene; mainly I wanted to see what he looked like up close. (The answer: He's kind of a human Quake skin.) And he was, shall we say, not happy; the logos were off, the Gene animation in the game was "cute, not tough—he's supposed to be tough!" Etc. Not for nothing has Simmons become a multi-millionaire from all his KISS properties; I'm guessing this one won't come out quite on schedule.

Word is that Simmons was much more pleased with the other KISS-based title, Psycho Circus, and well he should be; it's a cool looking game that has something action titles have kinda lacked for a while, smart melee-based play. Hey, who needs good



Ion Storm's Deus Ex

enemy AI when you can simply have swarms of 'em coming at you?

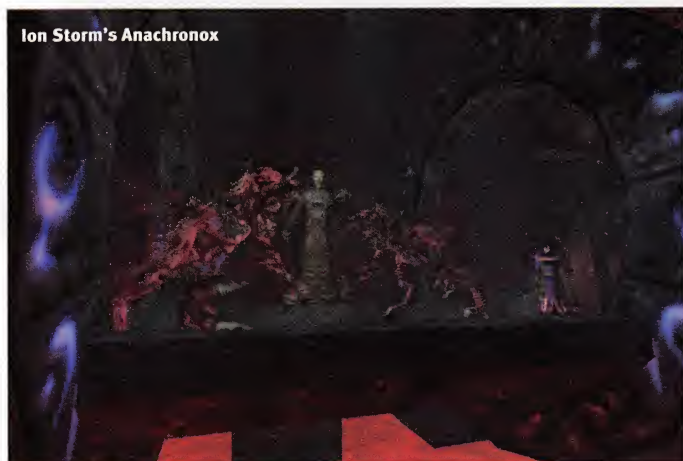
Psycho Circus, from Third Law - some of the former ION Storm folks, and I'll get back to that in a second - was typical of many of the games showcased at E3; beyond the serious hype titles, there were a lot of excellent sleepers to keep an eye on. For instance, SWAT 3, from Sierra, *does* have fabulous AI; I thought it had to be the Half-Life engine, but it turns out to be a new one altogether. Another low-key winner was Acclaim's Re-Volt, which takes the venerable R/C radio controlled cars and turns them into manic, out-of-control racers.

As for ION Storm, they were the talk of nearly everywhere I went. They clearly have a ton riding on Daikatana, which was on its third E3 showing in as many years. We'll see it soon enough, and it's cool enough, but maybe they're focusing on the wrong stuff; Anachronox (on its second E3 pass) and Deus Ex were a lot more interesting. Again, it's the sleepers you want to watch for.

SIDELINES

You know the Smithsonian Institute? That homage to all things manmade and technological apparently has three video games on display in its venerable corridors. One of them is Dragon's Lair. Little more than a series of short animated cartoons during which the player had to move the joystick in the correct direction and precisely the correct moment in order to view the subsequent animated cartoon, this is one of the games chosen to represent the most important entertainment phenomenon of the past twenty years. Nearly as amazing is the fact that Blue Byte have signed up the rights to create a sequel, rather predictably assigned Dragon's Lair 3D. Original designers Don Bluth and Rick Dyer, who also created the similar Space Ace in the 80s, will once again team up for the forthcoming "real-time" action/adventure.

After the collapse of Sir-Tech late last year, several games were plunged deep into development uncertainty. One of the more eagerly-awaited titles was Jagged Alliance 2. News reaches us now that wargame veterans Talonsoft have secured the rights to publish this promising squad-based combat game.



Ion Storm's Anachronox

Violence in games, part 6083

In the US, an amendment has been passed to a juvenile justice bill calling for the Federal Trade Commission and the Justice Department to investigate the marketing of computer and video games. In particular, concerns have been raised that the advertising campaigns for violent games are being directed at children who, under classification guidelines, should not be purchasing such titles.

Senator Lieberman, who proposed the amendment, made this statement: "I hope the entertainment industry will see this legislation as an urgent plea to stop the denials and excuses and to start working with us in addressing the toxic mix that is turning our kids into killers. At a minimum, I hope they will take it as a stern warning that we will not tolerate the marketing of ultraviolent, adult-rated products to children."

Backing the plan, President Clinton had the following suggestion for all those involved in the games industry. "Don't make young people want what your own rating systems say they shouldn't have," Clinton said. "The time has come to show some restraint, even if it has a short-term impact on the bottom line."



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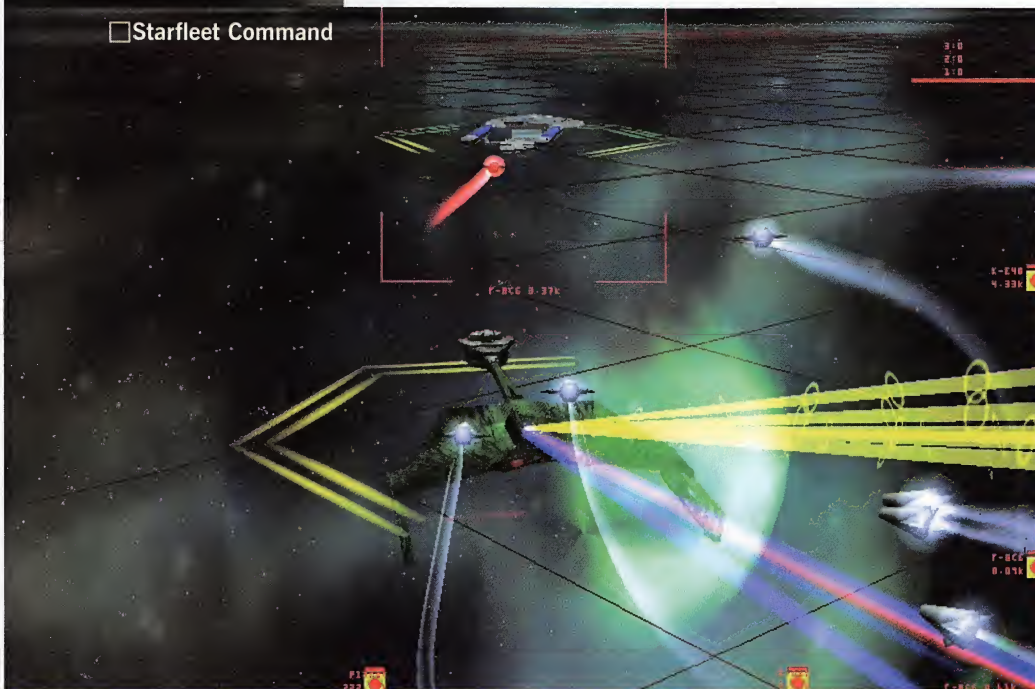
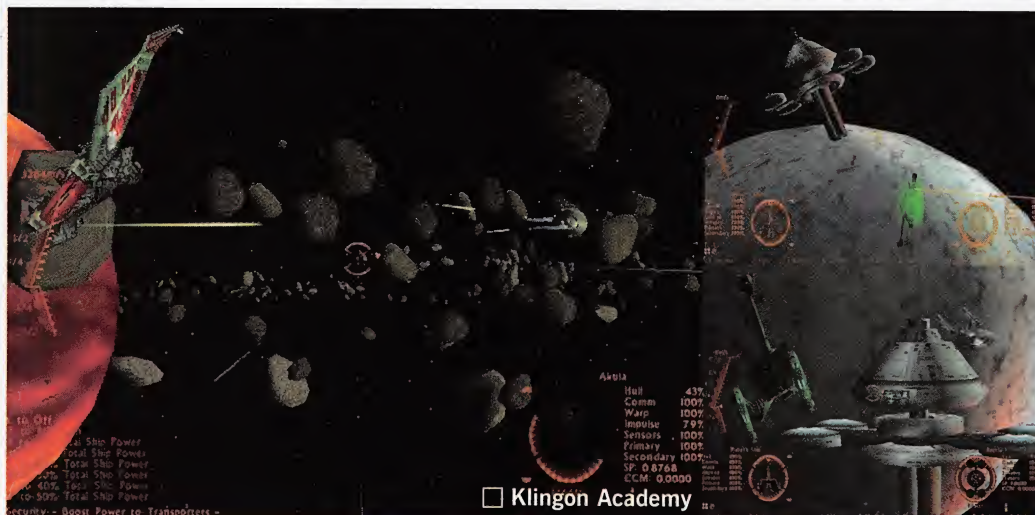
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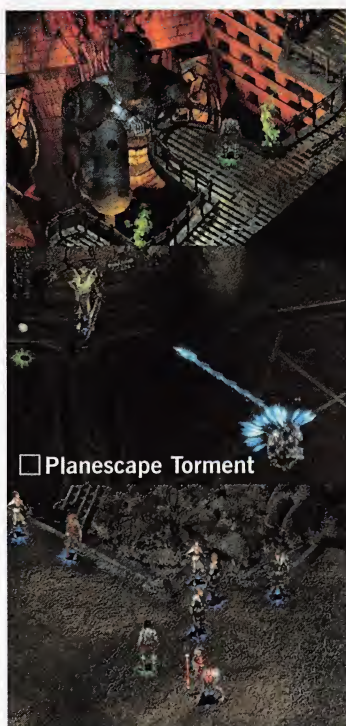
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E3

Gallery

E3 was so huge, we couldn't fit it all in our report. Here are more shots of what impressed the PowerPlay E3 Tactical Response group.





THE DREAM MACHINE

The art of computer assembly

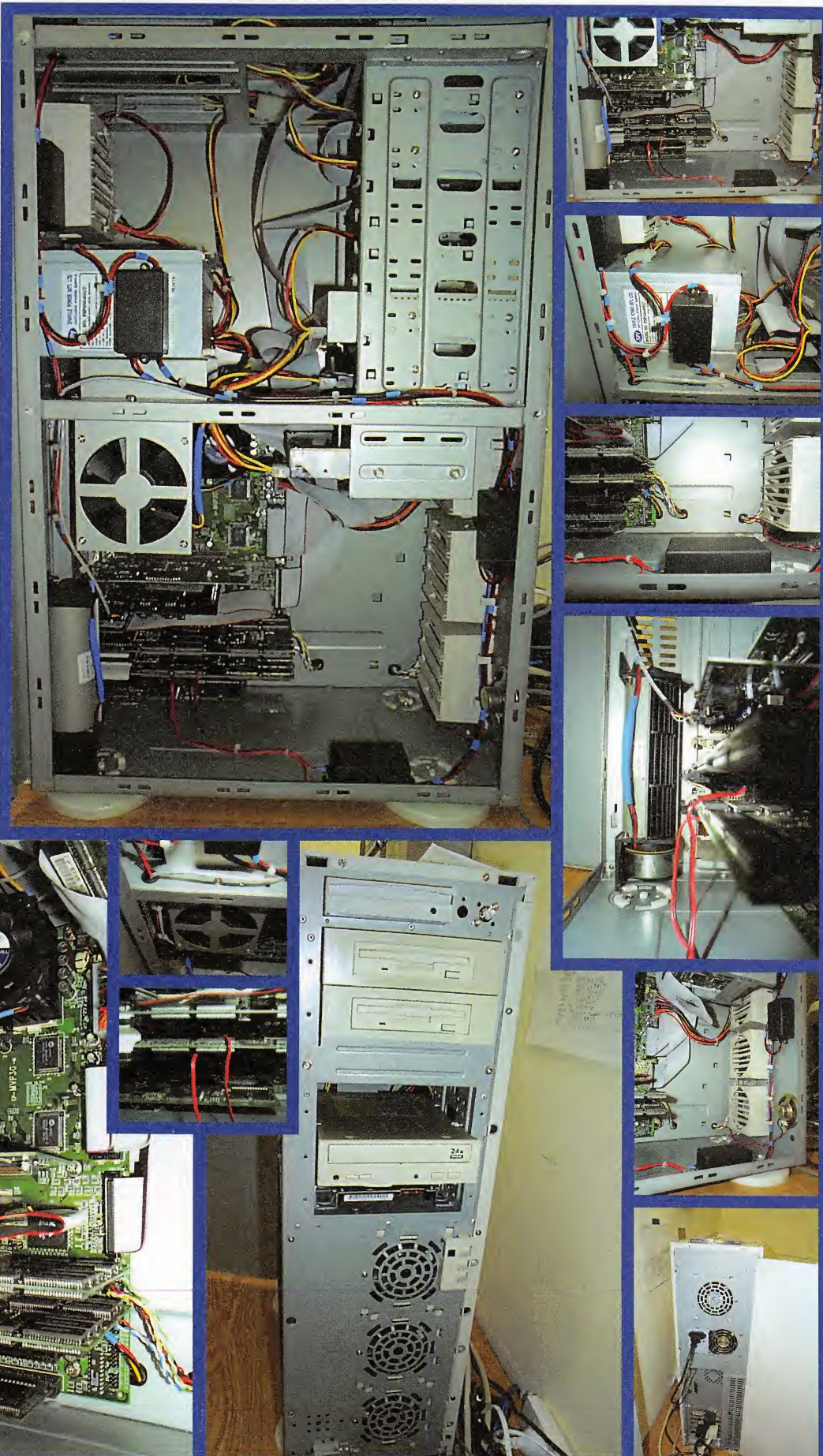
Completely awestruck. Is what we were when we saw the photos of the "Dream Machine" that Luke from NRA Computers sent us. The Dream Machine was ordered by one of their customers, who asked for this very basic design philosophy: to keep it as neat, as tidy, and as accessible as possible.

As the screenshots reveal, the Dream Machine is a work of art. It was designed for the ultimate gaming enthusiast. The beautiful sense of order within the machine allows for poetic upgrades, and the abundance of space gives more room for cooling accessories and the like than the typical setup.

Just in case you were thinking that this is a standard on offer at most computer hardware stores, think again. The Dream Machine was a labour of love which took days to complete. Obviously, it's not a "straight of the assembly-line" type of machine. Still, try your luck with your local and friendly dealer, or contact NRA on (02) 9233-8022.

For those curious at heart, the machine contains:

AMD K6 400, Viper 550, 2x Voodoo 2 12Mb (SLI), Asus Socket 7 motherboard, SB Live, 128 Mb SDRAM, 2940 Datech SCSI card, 2x Ultra 4.5 GB HDs.



VOODOO 3 3000 AGP

RRP: \$450 approx

Ignoring the 16bit vs. 32bit colour debate, this thing is just fast!

Finally the "next generation" in video cards are here, and it's time wonder if we need to dip into our pockets and once again upgrade our video card. With all of the new video cards that are available, the 3dfx name still stands proud and mighty. As we all stand and give a round of applause to the new Voodoo3 3000 16Mb graphics card, does it live up to all the hype that surrounds it? And will this be a gaming card that will last us a while?

Memory matters

With all the new video cards that are now available, especially the 32MB cards, it seems that the 16Mb Voodoo3 3000 can still out-do some of the competitors based around the same category of 16MB cards, and will still do the job without having to fork out the extra dollars and will still give the user satisfaction.

The Voodoo3 3000 comes packed with the now single-chip 128bit 2D/3D accelerator, 16/24 bit Z-buffer and is AGP. While testing this card out on various machines it was giving a constant and steady fill rate of 280-320 million pixels/sec fill rate according to vari-

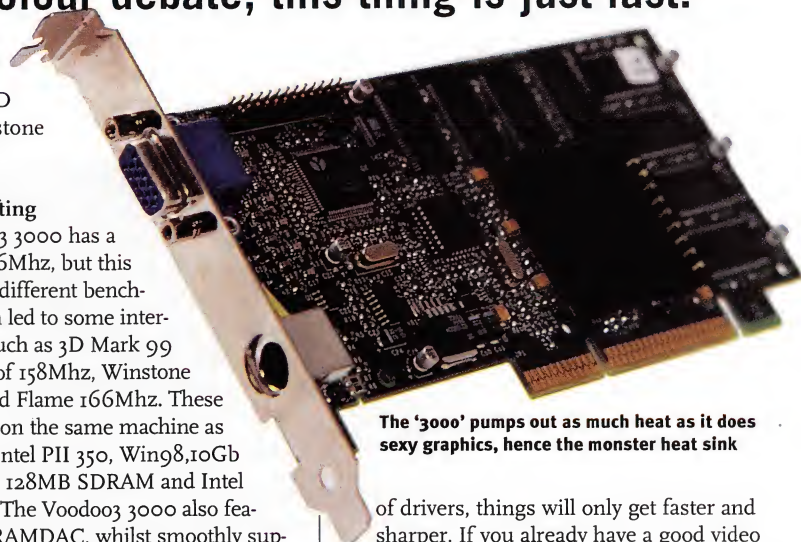
ous benchmarking tools such as 3D Mark 99, Winstone and Flame 98.

Frequency shifting

The Voodoo3 3000 has a clock rate of 166Mhz, but this varied with the different benchmarking, which led to some interesting results such as 3D Mark 99 gave a reading of 158Mhz, Winstone had 172Mhz and Flame 166Mhz. These results were all on the same machine as well (Genuine Intel PII 350, Win98, 10Gb IDE Hard drive 128MB SDRAM and Intel mother board). The Voodoo3 3000 also features 350Mhz RAMDAC, whilst smoothly supporting 1900x1200 screen resolution (it is however capable of 2048x1536).

Speed

Most impressively, the Voodoo3 3000 easily snaps up a cool 85fps in 16MB texture rendering on the likes of Requiem and Quake2. And with the addition of the constant upgrade

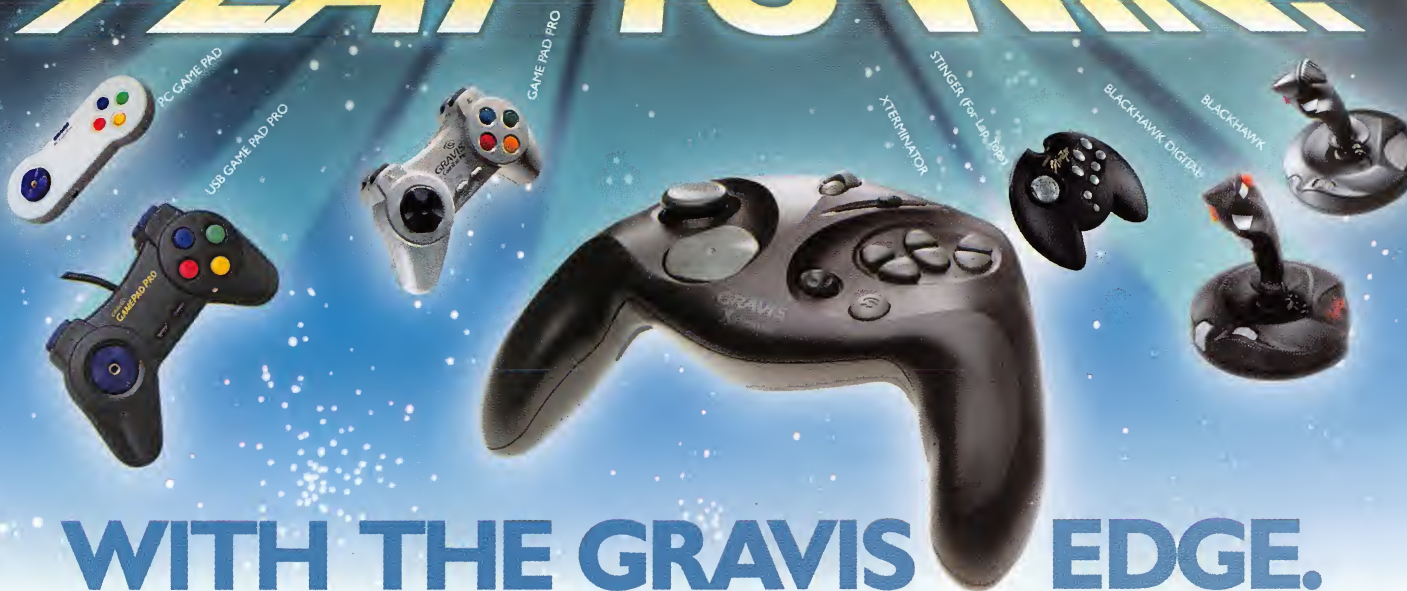


The '3000' pumps out as much heat as it does sexy graphics, hence the monster heat sink

of drivers, things will only get faster and sharper. If you already have a good video card with 16MB on board you might want to hang on to it or just collect your extra \$200 and proceed to "go" on to the 32Mb cards, and for those wanting to upgrade but don't have the extra dollars and are moving up from the old 8Mb or 12Mb cards, this is the one to give a shot at.

John Dominic

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Direct 3D gaming super power

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One of the first tests this card was put through was a simple but very complex animation using reflective/refractive materials and a combination of lighting and chrome surfaces in 3D Studiomax.

Creating graphics can always look good as a bitmap and when in construction for a game, but when you take that image and use it as a material surface and drop it into a game or animation things can change at 25, 29.97, 30 for video and up to 500fps (frames per second) for games.

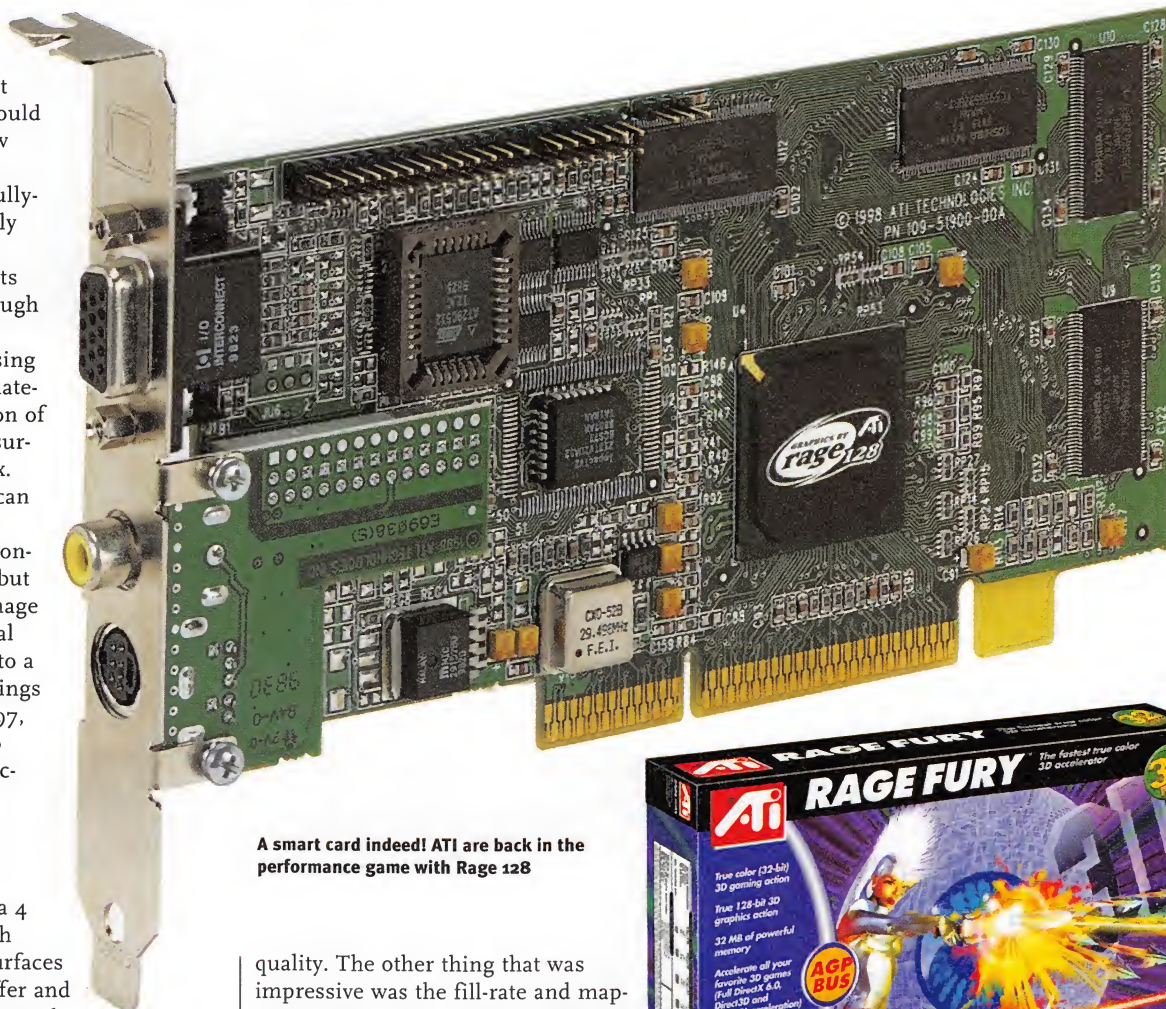
Game friendly

In a simple test, a teapot was created in a 4 light environment with reflective/refractive surfaces and using 16 bit Z buffer and a full 360 rotational control with a frame rate up to 200fps and the polygon count - well it was fairly high even for a PC game, believe it or not, and 3 bitmap layers per polygon.

Now, all this is similar to the reflection on cars in most race games. The first image was used using a Voodoo 2 16mb card and the other on the ATI RAGE FURY 32mb card, both at 800x600. While one was on a 16Mb card and the other 32Mb, remember, the whole point of this exercise was to see how much detail the card could handle by pushing it to its limit. With this kind of detail and the extra memory it will allow for a whole new gaming experience, with faster and clearer graphics.

Oh the quality!

Okay, not every game is made like that yet. As some games tend to have a high fps rate for smoke and explosions or even surface material, usually you tend to get a banding or gradient rings around these images, the ATI RAGE FURY eliminates this as it can calculate and switch the fill-rate of the pixel polygon count a lot faster (up to 58% per 100th/sec) with superior



A smart card indeed! ATI are back in the performance game with Rage 128

quality. The other thing that was impressive was the fill-rate and mapping speed. A fine example of this is as you turn around fast or do the close up of the wall routine in FPS games, the image stays clear. I was fortunate to push the screen resolution up to 1920x1200 on a 21" monitor and the results with some games was frightening and too realistic! To DV or DVD, is the question

The next test was the video test, both standard and DVD. Standard video was clear and crisp, but the highlight is DVD - it is outstanding. Most DVD players come with their drivers and other bits and pieces of software, but the ATI RAGE FURY is quality plus. There are a lot of good video cards that handle the DVD videos quite well, but some times they tend to jump or skip a frame, which doesn't bother some people but when it does happen it can be annoying.

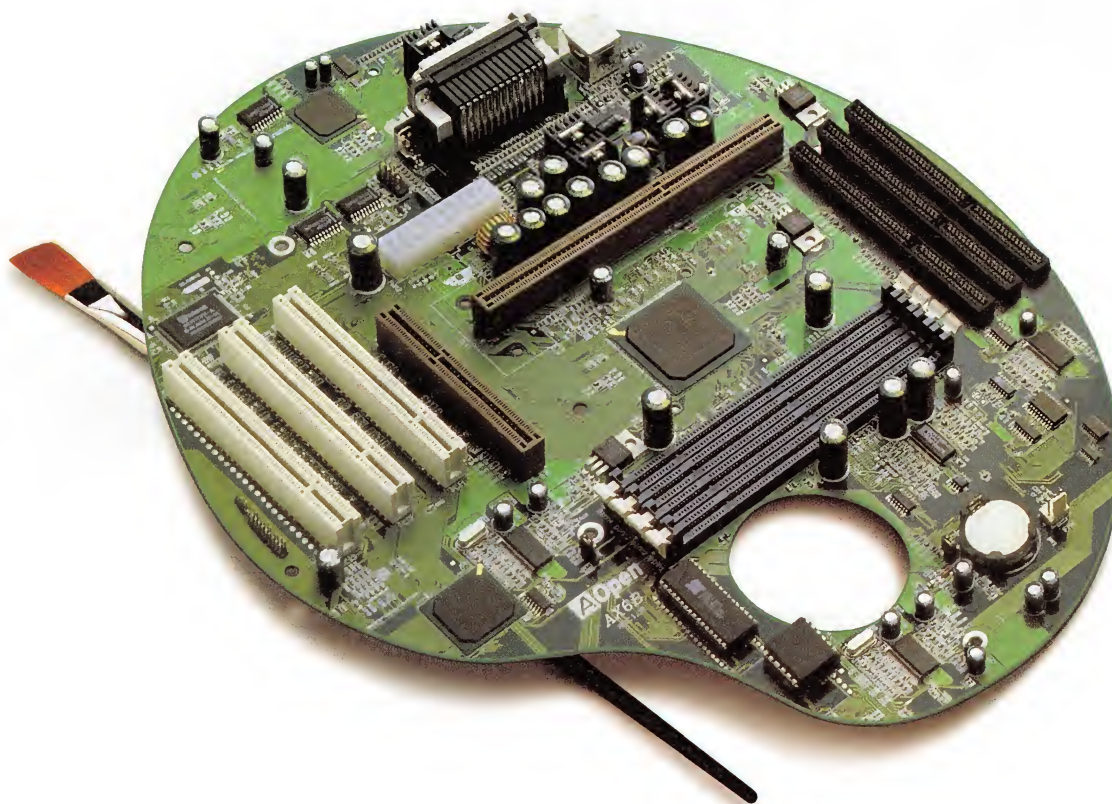
Feature packed

The ATI RAGE FURY also has composite and s-video output connectors, which allow you to hook it up to your TV or DVD video for huge screen gaming or recording from your PC to your video camera, if you



require these things. For the price of this video card at present, I guess you just can't go wrong. The game performance is outstanding, the videos are beautiful, the TV video out quality booth 640x480 is nice and the 800x600 is excellent compared to what's on the market at this price range.

John Dominic



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Microsoft FPS controller

It's not very extreeme sounding, but "Dual Strike" is the name Microsoft have settled upon for their new FPS controller. Nevermind that though, for it's all in the plastic, what counts, that is.

We gave the Dual Strike an extended playtest at E3, and can report that it... works. Functional, yes indeed, but desirable? You decide! As much as we like to dish out expert advice, the very nature of this thing precludes that. It's a personal thing, Quake driving, and there have been more than a few attempts in the past at replacing the ever popular mouse and keyboard combo with a purpose-built job. All have failed in the marketplace, but then, all sucked, generally. Of the lot, the Dual Strike is easily the most usable. The input functions for the various bits on the Dual Strike are configurable, but in general you would use the pivoting left hand bit for looking ('mouselook' style), with



The Dual Strike - a, shall we say, "courageous" design from Microsoft

the D-Pad for movement and the buttons for weapons selection and bound functions.

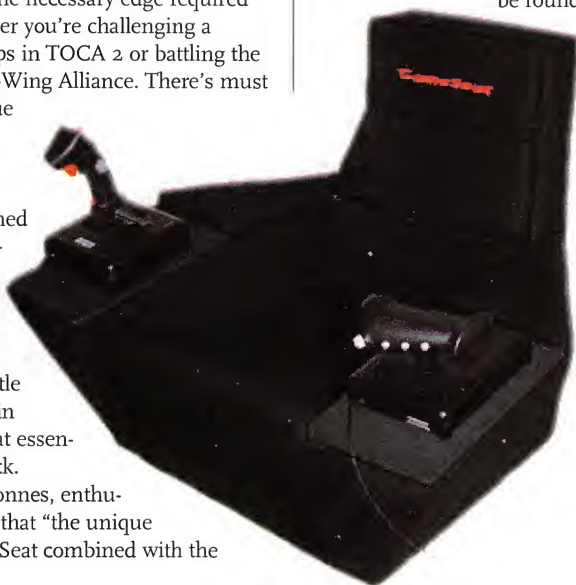
As we discovered, it takes more than just a few experimental minutes to make up your mind with the 'Strike', so go friendship-build with the local games shop and see if they'll let you take one home for the night.

Gameseat

Logitech Wingman

Forget your clockspeed, your 3D hardware, your surround sound speakers and even your feng-shui approved gaming environment. The single most important aspect of your gaming setup is the object upon which you choose to plant your arse - the gaming throne. True gamers know that posterior comfort can provide the necessary edge required for victory, whether you're challenging a friend to a few laps in TOCA 2 or battling the Empire solo in X-Wing Alliance. There's must be at least one true gamer at Excelle Corp because they've designed the obliquely-named Gameseat, a dedicated gaming seat that boasts special pads on the arms for your joystick and throttle as well as a built-in transducer for that essential tactile feedback. Designer Dave Tonnes, enthusiastically reveals that "the unique look of the GameSeat combined with the

comfort, ergonomics, and tactile feedback makes people want to sit in it and try it out. Judging from the grins they get on their faces, I think we've developed a winner." Presently, the Gameseat is only available in the US for just under \$400, but Excelle hope to have it on our shores sometime soon. More info can be found at www.gameseat.com



Wow! All that's missing is the built in fridge and chamberpot

Logitech

Wheel Mouse for Notebooks RRP\$99.95

PCPP Labs Unveil Shocking Mouse Truth!

In issue #38 we reported enthusiastically on the arrival of a couple of "Gamer's Mice". While good, it was only the words "Gaming Mouse" printed large on the side of the Logitech job that gave us a clue to its design purpose.

This got us all fired up about the sad state of mice for gamers. Did anyone say "quest"? Off we set, then, on a mission to find for you something that a gamer would actually want to own. The search was deep and we looked in the most unlikely places, which, as it turns out, is where the Grail lay.

Logitech have, buried deeply in their product range, a thing called the "Wheel Mouse for Notebooks". Ignore the name and the false impressions it gives, for this is the one.

It's very small, which is probably very useful for mousing on economy-class airline tables, but for us lot it's a win for far more important reasons. Shaping up at roughly half the size of the standard Microsoft Intellimouse, the Logitech is a delight to hold in hand. Control is fingertip only and is extremely precise. Furthermore, this mouse weighs approximately nothing, disconcerting at first, but after a few smooth minutes of fragging you'll hate yourself for wasting good gaming years using anything else.

The Notebook Mouse is a standard 2-button + wheel job. Extra buttons would have been nice, but the design perfection of the rest of it makes up for that. Clicking it solid and tactile, there'll be no accidental rockets sent forth from this baby!

We're a bit worried that the cord would be way too short for normal desktop use, but it measures in at only a hand-span short of the Intellimouse cord. At the end of the cord is a PS/2 adaptor, which allows the Notebook Mouse to be overclocked from its default 80Hz to a silkysmooth 200Hz. Perform this miracle trick at home with any old PS/2 mouse! Use 'PS/2 Rate' on this month's CD.

Out of the box, the Notebook mouse is close to perfect for gamers. Being the experimental kinds, and having a Logitech Gaming Mouse lying around, we transplanted the Gaming Mouse's heavier trackball into the Notebook Mouse, even better! Now movement was as precise and controllable as we'd ever want. Of course, this little act of brilliance simply isn't feasible for most, so be assured, the Notebook Mouse, 'as is', will serve and love you well.

Ahh, almost forgot, it's black.



Gaming mice - one of the rare instances where small is better

SIDEWINDER

Microsoft Game Pad Pro

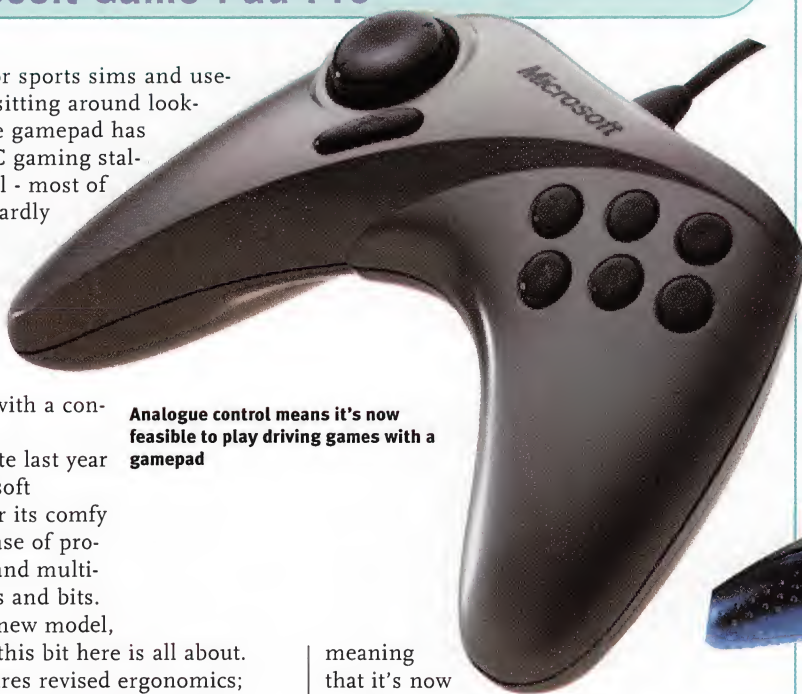
Invaluable for sports sims and useful for just sitting around looking cool, the gamepad has long been a PC gaming stalwart peripheral - most of us have one, hardly any of us use them. Then, once a year along comes a game that simply demands use with a control pad.

Our favourite last year was the Microsoft Sidewinder, for its comfy ergonomics, ease of programmability and multitude of buttons and bits. Now there's a new model, which is what this bit here is all about. The 'Pro' features revised ergonomics; instead of going for the 'sinister spaceship' look favoured by other pad-makers, MS's design just feels great to hold for lengthy periods of gaming. Most importantly new, though, is the modified D-pad design. Now it combined digital control with proportional analogue movement,

Analogue control means it's now feasible to play driving games with a gamepad

meaning that it's now possible to play driving and flying games smoothly with the pad.

Not an essential piece of gaming equipment, the control pad nevertheless has its moments, and the Sidewinder Pro is the current leader of the pack.



Tilt

Logitech Game Pad

It's called "Tilt" and it's not wrong at all to be thinking about a young Brooke Shields right now.

More Logitech cleverness, and this time they got it right on purpose. The Tilt Gamepad is built around motion-sensing technology, like the Microsoft Freestyle Pro, so you wave it around the place to keep your bike/plane/ship/cute critter on track. Apart from looking dead snappy, Logi claim their Tilt is "way more precise" than the Microsoft gear. We'll let you know, for this is but a cruel teaser, reader, we haven't actually been sent one yet, but gee, it's all looking good so far...



XENTOR

Guillemot

TNT2 just for you

The very first shrink-wrapped TNT2 arrived mere moments ago, in typing time. It's the Guillemot Xentor, and seeing as it's the first TNT2 we've received with final drivers and support, we already love it.

PCPP # 38 was almost entirely TNT2 info, so we'll skip straight to the chase here: Xentor comes in several flavours, depending on memory and frequency configuration. At this stage, the 16Mb 166MHz memory version will retail for \$339, with the 32Mb version for \$549.

French manufacturer Guillemot have had a low-key entrance in the Australian market. In Europe they dominate, with a reputation for quality and attractive pricing.



PHOENIX 2

Guillemot

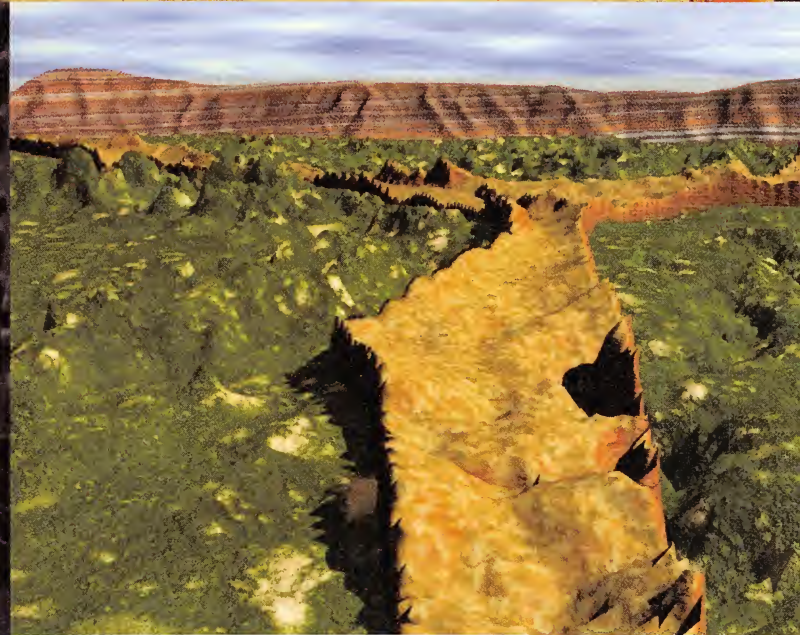
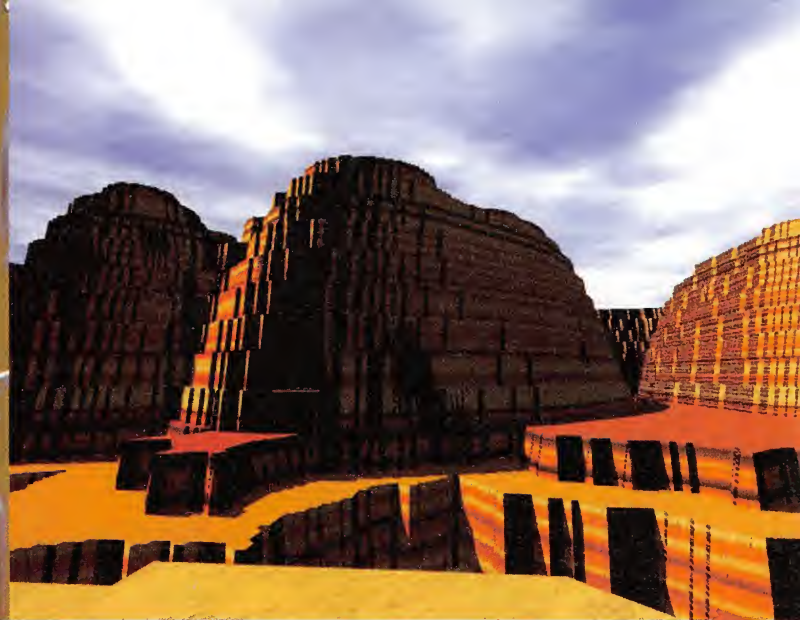
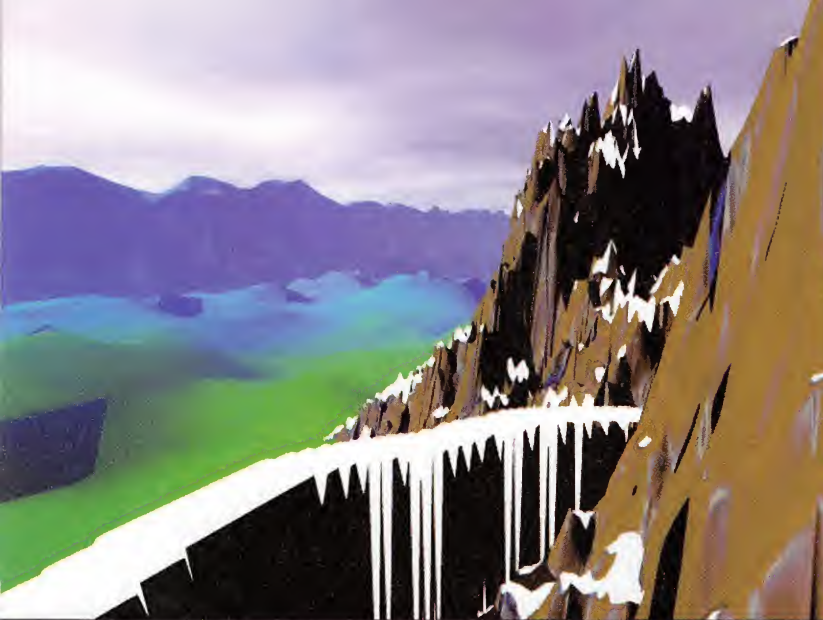
TNT2 on the cheap

Depressing as it is, there's a reality floating around out there which forces gamers who



want the Rolls Royce gear to settle for second best. It's called economics and usually it's bloody depressing...

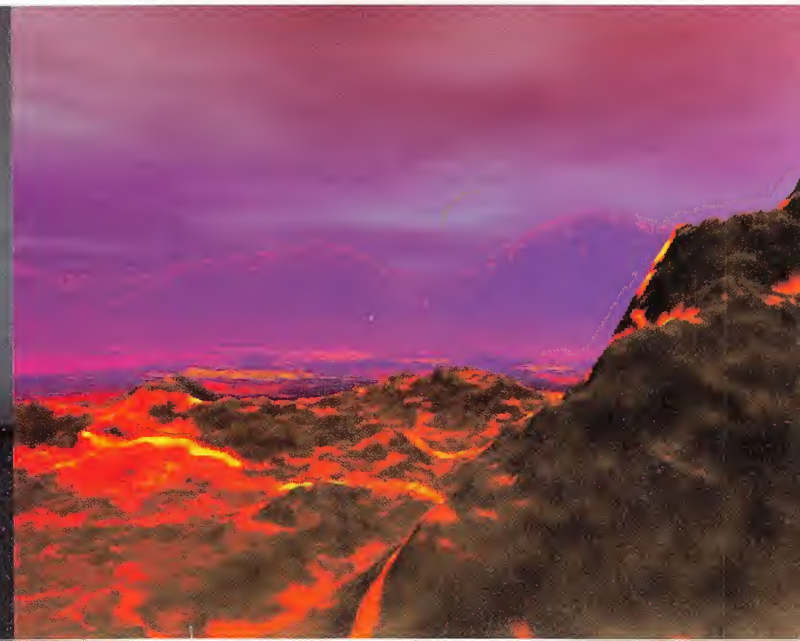
Guillemot have an answer. It's the Phoenix 2 TNT Vanta. Yep, a regulation TNT 1 with the bare minimum 8Mb of memory on board. TNT, whether 1 or 2, is the ticket to amazing graphics quality, so if you're shopping around and see the Vanta box on the shelf, for a RRP of a mere \$209, then put lunch off for another week and plug in some budget power!



Thanks to the work of a young Sydney based development team,
are we about to witness adventure games...

COMING OF AGE?

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ADVENTURE GAME ENGINE



Brendan Reville has been making games since he was a teenager. Now, having since finished a Computer Science degree at Macquarie University and set up his own software company, Twilight Software, he wants to let us make our own games. Twilight's recently released Adventure Game Engine is a tool that will enable anyone to do exactly that. Excited at the possibilities AGE might offer disenchanted adventure gamers, we had a chat with Brendan about his creation...

PC PowerPlay: You're calling your creation a "multimedia adventure game engine". What does that actually mean?

Brendan Reville: AGE contains all the programming required for an adventure game, without anything specific to a given title. Any developer, including us, can just type out simple script files, load in images and sounds, and the engine will play it back on a Windows machine.

PCPP: I assume that little, if any, programming experience will be necessary to use the engine. Besides having a brilliant idea, what else would we need to make a game? Could a complete technical dunce do it?

BR: A bit of technical skill is obviously required, but no previous programming experience. Our tutorial documentation teaches everything necessary. To make an adventure game you need a design to map everything out. You need to make artwork, perhaps with a



movies. Then you need to type out script files to tie it all together. Our engine does all the tricky internal stuff to bring it alive.

PCPP: Will the games created with this engine necessarily be of a similar type?

BR: The engine is designed from the ground-up to support first-person adventure games, inspired by games like Rise of the Dragon and the Manhunter games (both from Sierra) which I really enjoyed.

PCPP: Basically I'm asking whether it's flexible enough to accommodate different styles.

BR: While the engine is tied around viewing one static screen at a time, it's flexible enough that we're looking at producing some multimedia (non-game) titles with it.

PCPP: Static screens? Do you envisage that any form of panoramic, rotating view would be feasible?

BR: The catch phrase for the engine is "keep it simple". We're not targeting hardcore gamers so much as the emerging mainstream market - people who might not have played computer games before. For simplicity's sake we're avoiding the panoramic landscapes - although



PCPP: The adventure genre could be said to have stagnated in recent times. Where do you think adventure games and designers have gone wrong? Do you have a solution?

BR: Everybody bemoans the death of adventure games, and to be honest I don't know what went wrong. I do know that I love adventures, but I really haven't had enough time to play them all in recent years. One

trend I do see is that games are becoming more "mainstream" - more people are buying computers for the first time, and are looking for accessible titles. With this in mind, I think games with strong stories and less action will become more and more popular.

PCPP: Less action, but also less puzzles?

BR: I think that the puzzles are a great way of creating an engrossing story. Every story is



"WE'RE NOT TARGETING HARDCORE GAMERS SO MUCH AS THE EMERGING MAINSTREAM MARKET"

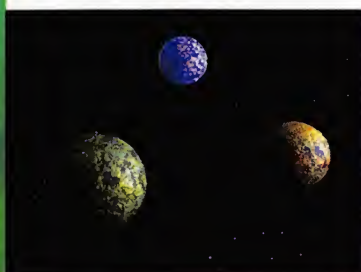
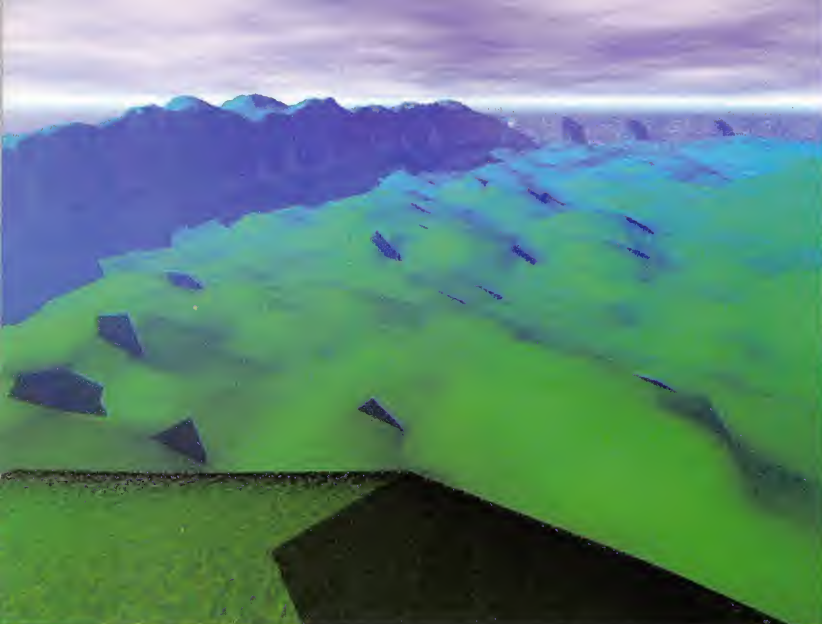
3D renderer, photographs, or scanned drawings. You need to make sounds (a microphone plugged in a soundcard will do for starters). You can optionally create movies, which you could again create in a 3D renderer, or even capture from videotape using one of the new video-capture cards. After that, you need to type out text "script" files in our custom layout, so that the engine knows exactly what to do with all that stuff. In short, you need to make pictures, sounds and maybe

I've enjoyed some games which use this technique.

PCPP: And what about transitions between views or locations, how might these be handled?

BR: Transitions can be handled by full-motion video cutscenes, or just with straight cuts, like in film. Nice slow transitions are fun for a while, but we like to let the user get to places in the game world quickly, without having to wait for a slow transition to display for the umpteenth time.





about overcoming challenges, and having puzzles in the story allow the game player to become *involved* by having to overcome these very real challenges. Of course, the puzzles can be simple physical puzzles ("which object to use here?") or even story oriented ("who do you think committed the murder?"). Adventure game makers have mastered a lot of the skills in creating physical puzzles, but I think that games with story-based puzzles have a long way to go.

PCPP: So what is the best game you've played? Which one has managed to master these skills?

BR: That's way too hard to pick. At the time, I would have said Monkey Island 2. Day of the Tentacle takes it on. So does Grim Fandango. I see a trend...

PCPP: All three are exemplary of the traditional adventure obsession with wacky object-based puzzles. Does the future of adventure games lie in narrative choice constituting the bulk of the gameplay? I'm thinking of narrative dilemmas instead of inventory/object puzzles.

BR: Giving the user a narrative choice - such as a multipath story - is very dangerous in my opinion. It was tried with "multipath movies" and failed dismally. A "story" is about having a series of events related to the viewer. Multiple paths can dilute the message, until the point where there is no one "story", just a jumble of possibilities. I'm a firm believer in having a single, strong story. That said, puzzles will probably have to become

easier, but without them the user becomes passive, and isn't involved in the challenge.

PCPP: You're already working on two games yourself using AGE, 1999 and the provisionally-titled Mystery. Tell us more about them.

BR: 1999 was the working title for our fully rendered adventure. It's a first-person adventure, a little like Myst, but will be filled with interesting characters. Our hero is a space adventurer, and in this game he battles an evil wizard who's going to destroy our lovely princess' home planet. The turn of the millennium is a major theme. The working title of "1999" has been replaced by what we assume to be the final title, "The Millennium Adventure". I guess you could say that it will be characterised by lush artwork, fun characters and fun, intuitive 'old school' adventure puzzles - none of these sliding-tile puzzles or weird lever machines. The Mystery is being kept under wraps for a bit longer. As you'll see from our website, it's fully photographed, which isn't so common for adventure games.

PCPP: You're a small company

are firstly interested in seeing what kind of product can be built, geographical boundaries will only affect later stages of negotiations. It just means we have to pay for more expensive airplane tickets.

PCPP: So, I assume one could easily order or license AGE online.

BR: The website (www.twilightsoftware.com) contains full information on licensing AGE. From \$US49 (the price of a new game) users can buy the Hobbyist Evaluation version, moving up to the Hobbyist Release license if they're serious. For releasing commercial games, the prices are appropriately higher. I don't expect people to blindly pay out money - they can download a Sample Game from our website first which lets them see what the engine is capable of, and to see what kind of artwork and scripting needs to be done. After that, it's a simple credit card or cheque order. We ship the Developer Kit CD-ROM, with 72 pages of on-disc tutorial documentation, the full Sample Game, and a custom-compiled engine, when we receive payment.

PCPP: AGE has been officially released for a short time now. How has the response been to it?

BR: The most rewarding part of it is that people from around the world have already licensed the engine for making their own products. I'm most proud of the fact that they all tried the Sample Game first, and then decided to license the engine. They knew what they were buying, and they knew that it was good.

"ADVENTURE GAME MAKERS HAVE MASTERED A LOT OF THE SKILLS IN CREATING PHYSICAL PUZZLES, BUT I THINK THAT GAMES WITH STORY-BASED PUZZLES HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO"

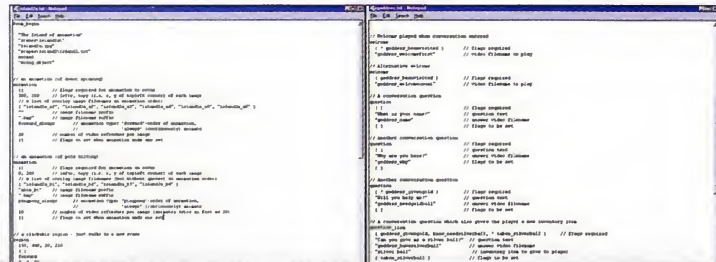
based a long way from the major centres of the games industry. What has been your experience in dealing with publishers and the like? Have you received any kind of support?

BR: We're still working fairly independently. To be honest, the internet is our main business tool so far, and most people who come across our company don't even realise we're not in the USA. Traditional boundaries don't seem to apply in this business, at least not yet. Publishers

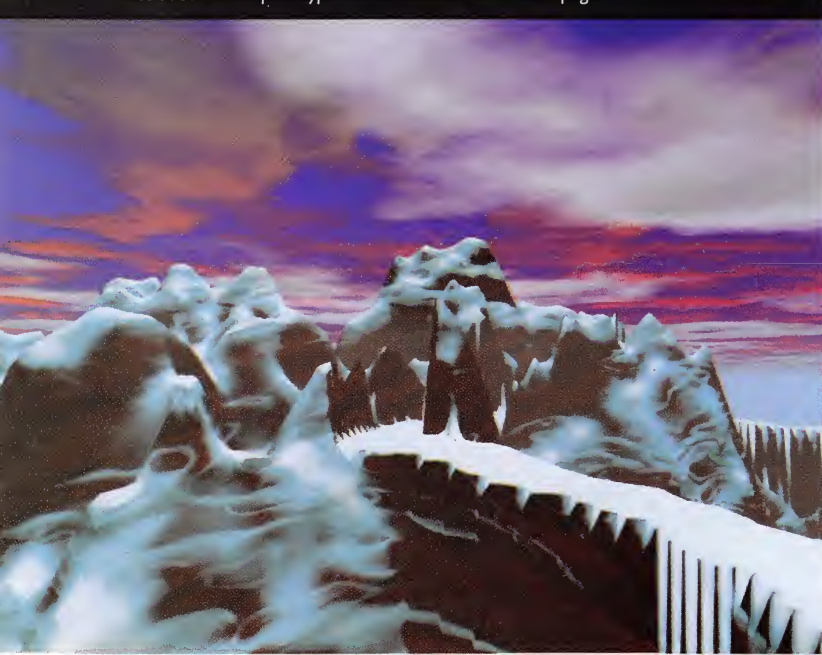
PCPP: One final question now. You're trapped in a prison cell. There are no windows and only one heavy and very locked door. It's dark. You have a credit card, a box of matches, a section of rubber garden hose, a wad of chewing gum, a bucket of soapy water, and a small furry animal. What do you do?

BR: Give your furry friend a bath with the soapy water, and settle down - you're both gonna be locked in there for a very, very long time!

PCPP: Thanks, Brendan.



The development of an adventure game is a long and arduous process, from the script files above to the prototype visuals scattered over these pages.



STREETWARS

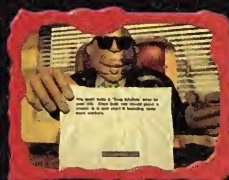
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MAKING MUSIC

Your PC can sing, if you just teach it how. Agata Budinska explores PC sound creation software.

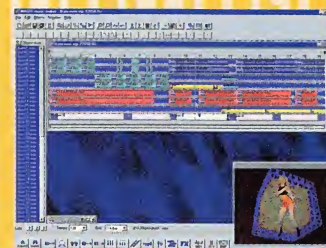
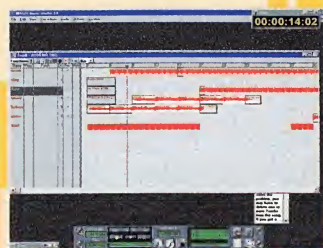


In the beginning there was a sound, and that sound was "bleep". We have come a long way, haven't we? I mean, once electronic music was giant computers hooked up to Casio keyboards playing little beeps with names like 'cool sax' and those annoying pre programmed drum beats "Rumba", "Salsa", and "Waltz". Remember Human League? What about early Beastie Boys? Depech Mode also liked their synthetic sound. Oh yes, we've come a long way. With new technology came better sound quality. Gone are unconvincing noises called "string quartet" - these have now been replaced with studio quali-

ty midi sound. Sound that is versatile, diverse, and can do pretty much anything you want it to, provided of course, you have the right tools.

So for the budding musician (whether you're interested in creating the next new wave masterpiece or composing music for games, perhaps), there's a much more interesting palate of sound and sound manipulation tools available to work with. The real question is, where to start?

For clarity, we're not looking at both ends of the spectrum - studio recording (a typical setup of this type runs into the tens if not hundreds of thousands of dollars), or basic sound pro-



grams (bundled with your sound card) that lets you fool around with blips and beeps at home. A lot of new software can give you professional sound quality using nought but the humble home PC. They're cheap, fairly easy to use, and more importantly - versatile. All you need is a relatively fast machine, a large enough hard drive (depending on how diverse and how rich you want your recordings to be - remember that sound files consume a lot of hard drive space) and a decent sound card. Most programs run off wav files, so if you have a microphone hooked up, you're set.

These days there's a growing range of music/sound creation software on offer. In PCPP #37, we left you with a new product, the Magix Music line of software and samples. Like its major competition, this program runs off wav's. The beauty

Let's face it, the opportunity to create your own sound is pretty tempting. Once you tire of repeated bouts of Racer, you might want to check some of these programs out. This is how many game music composers started out.

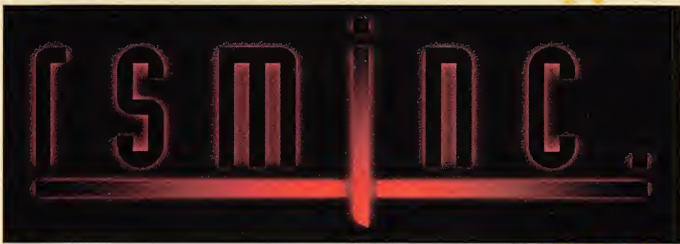
Magix has a lot of competition on its hands, with some pretty major names available out there. There is a whole catalogue of software for either midi sequencing or pure sound recording. Really, anything is possible, but it comes at a price. Cuebass VST, the standard ver-

"YOU DON'T WANT TO FORK OUT OVER A GRAND FOR A SOUND CREATION PROGRAM WITH FEATURES THAT WILL NEVER BE USED"

of the program is it lets anyone, no matter their previous experience, fully create their own sounds and songs. Yet another great feature of the program is the price tag, at around \$130, it's a great buy. Sure, there's a lot of disc swapping involved, even when opening a saved song file, but over all it's a neat little package. And so it seems this is the wave of the future. Program prices are dropping, and quality is on the up, making a lot of gamers curious.

sion will set you back around \$795, Cuebass Score \$995, and Cuebass VST24 a tidy \$1295. Sound Forge and Acid, both Sonic Foundries products, around \$650-\$700, plus a multitude of plug ins to really give you a complete set. Ultimately, be ever aware of what you want to create and match that with what the programs have on offer. You don't want to fork out over a grand for a sound creation program with features that will never be used.





Exclusive interview with RSMinc

We recently spoke to the members of RSMinc, a Sydney-based Industrial outfit of four that have been using computers to wile away the hours, playing Quake and Starcraft, and making their own style of music. Kurt, Martin, Hugh and Dan are releasing two CD's in the coming weeks, both of which were written, recorded, mixed, mastered and burnt on to disc in their own home. I asked them which programs they use and why, and how the whole damn thing works.

PCPP: So what software are you using on the albums?

Hugh: For sequencing purposes we use Sonic Foundry's Acid, which is a loop based music creation package, it retails in Australia for about \$800.

Dan: All of our music is put together in Acid using wav files.

Hugh: That's where we sequence the samples, which we've input ourselves, stuff sampled from various sources. In Sound Forge, which is a sample editing and processing program,

we do the touching up, noise reduction, postproduction effects, all kinds of compression and recombination. There's also a software drum machine called Fruity loops.

Kurt: We also use Rebirth a lot, and Hammerhead.

PCPP: So you guys, we take it, use live instruments, sample them, then load them in?

Hugh: We use live guitar, live bass, and live drums on occasion; live screaming is pretty prevalent...

Kurt: I mean, we've done a certain amount of studio recording for some of the drums, we've also done some guitars on DAT, but generally we prefer the bedroom environment, because we can ultimately tightly control the sounds we want.

Martin: And you don't have to worry that you're spending hundreds of dollars an hour for just piss-farting around in an expensive studio.

Kurt: Like, "I've just spent a hundred bucks for this hour, I've got to do it NOW". I mean, when you get an idea at home, you can just do it, no problems.



Hugh: Then it's just a matter of mixing that with samples taken from other sources, such as the net, such as our own sample creation programs, like Stomper, and just finding any other source we can put in our music.

Kurt: We've sampled some crazy stuff in the past. Someone slamming a door once became a kickdrum...

Dan: Can I just say at this point about Sonic Foundry's products, I love the way that Sound Forge and Acid integrate really well, it really serves our purposes. It's a well designed program that's easy to use.

Martin: They've got the best algorithms, I've found, for real time pitch shifting.

PCPP: What about programs like Cuebass?

Martin: Cuebass is all very fine, the reason it's rated so highly is because it has such external connectivity.

Dan: Yeah, you can get a lot of plug-ins for Cuebass.

Martin: It's more like if you have thousands of dollars worth of rack mountable midi sequencers, then Cuebass is cool.

Kurt: But it just doesn't serve our purposes.

Martin: It's too techy, if you just

want to sit down and fool around, then Cuebass is not the way to go.

Dan: We improvise, and it's hard to improvise with Cuebass.

Martin: It's rapid development... So you have to know what you're doing...

Kurt: With Cuebass, it seems you need to have some kind of musical theory behind you, and most of us don't. We don't have any real musical teaching.

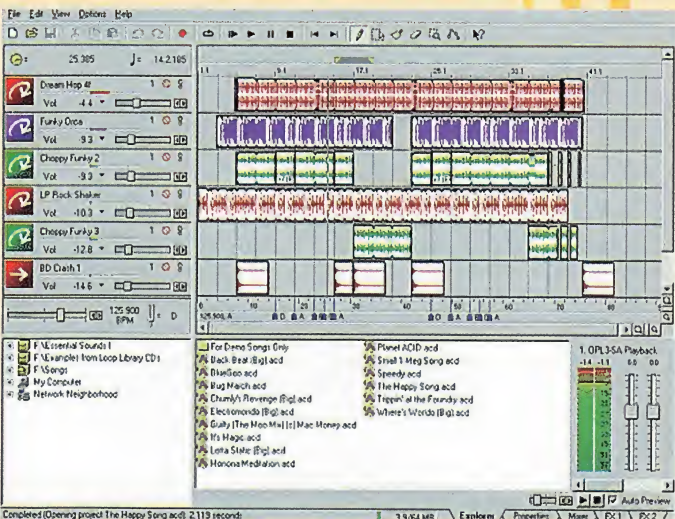
Hugh: I find that Acid has much better loop and beat detection, the way it can just take a drum sample and separate it into beats, and do the same with vox and so forth, it gives us a much better groove to work with.

Martin: I mean, if you sing some vocals, you can whack it in, and it will adjust any minor mistakes you've made.

Hugh: And the pitching capabilities are fantastic, you can adjust any note to a percentage of a semitone in Sound Forge.

Martin: The time stretching is great, no matter how out of beat you are, or the sample is, it'll fit it into the tempo, and shift the pitch into the same key. We don't need an engineer or mixer, cause it is so user friendly we can just do it ourselves, then burn it on to disc.

PCPP: Thanks guys.



(above) RSMinc's drum kit, guitars, keyboards and recording studio. (right and top) Sound Forge and ReBirth, which simulates an analog 303 synthesizer very well indeed.





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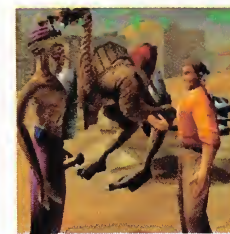
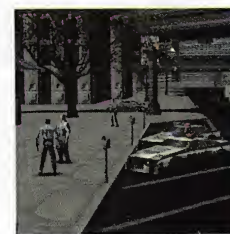
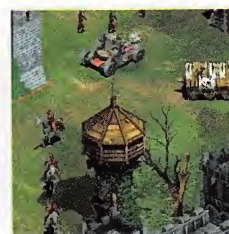
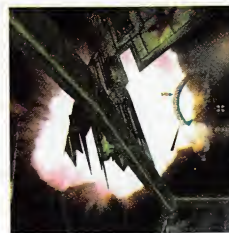
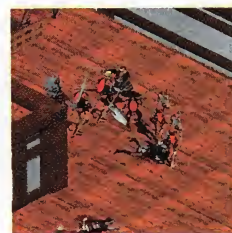
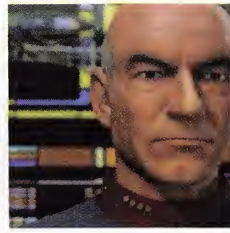
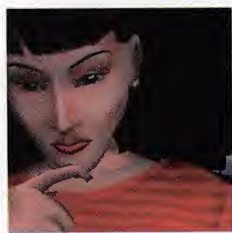


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The modified G20C



E3

The Big Games Hunt: **The Electronic Entertainment Expo 1999**

The crew return from L.A. with all the juice
on the best games you've ever seen!



From May 13-15 this year, the LA Convention Centre became a temple. A structure so huge, you could probably hide an entire suburb with in it. People from the four corners of the globe converged on this city within a city with one thing on their minds - games. It may sound simple and quaint but each of the 80,000+ attendees were fully aware of what their senses were about to be put through. Absolute hell.

surrounding 7 foot tall NBA celebrities. A life-size replica of Anakin Skywalker's pod from Episode 1 - The Phantom Menace. Half-naked women atop Harley-Davidsons. Giant, furry and kickable Q*bert mascots. Half-naked Xena impersonators. Extremely large examples of the human species in official LA Police Dept. uniforms. Half-naked PR bunnies...

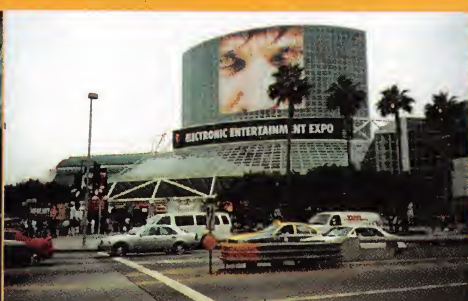
And of course, the games. There were no real surprises

result, there were many well-seasoned E3 attendees declaring E3 '99 as "the duller on record". An E3 with a small handful of exceptional games set against a huge backdrop of average titles or one that features more quality titles than you poke a stick at? We know which we prefer.

There was just too much to see. With the senses bombarded from all directions by developers demanding your attention, E3 '99 was an event that instilled

proud of.

With Virtual Reality (the sensationalized version) dead and buried, the mainstream media had to find a worthy substitute to detract attention from what E3 was all about. Violence in games and its effect on society was the hot topic, and lurching around almost every corner was a TV news team ready to pounce on a seemingly unsuspecting industry. And they came prepared to discredit us.



You've heard the spiel before, ad nauseam. E3 is over the top. E3 is gaming nirvana. E3 is huu-uggggee. E3 brings attendees to their knees (in more ways than one). Mammoth! Insane! Hip! Finger on the pulse! Blah.

What characterised E3 in May 1999 -

Half-naked women in cages. The General Lee. Half-naked women sitting on the hood of the General Lee. Giant two-story mechs. Half-naked cheerleaders

at this years E3. There were no announcements that would take the gaming world and turn it inside out. Sensation took a back seat.

Instead, there was a plethora of A-grade titles on display. So many in fact, that pruning them all down to an easily remembered list (for the obligatory exchange of your personal top 5 with other attendees) became a highly perplexing task. So many good games, that none really stood out from the pack. As a

and almost Zen-like focus in your mind. Give any and that glorious looking game invading your peripheral vision would pull you away from your current task at hand. And being demonstrated the game by say, the Lead Programmer or the Producer of the respective title is truly awe-inspiring. Bypassing the marketing machine and hearing it straight from the horses mouth is an experience beyond compare. Even more notable, the developers had plenty to be

The gaming industry responded beautifully. Where the mainstream media fought to simplify the issue and paint a ready scapegoat, the gaming industry showed remarkable insight into the complexity of the issue.

The only source of disappointment at E3 '99 (and this is truly soul-crushing stuff), was not being able to see ALL of the amazing games, people and products on display.

E3 '99 dull? Never.



Top 5

The PCPP Team's Picks of E3

Ben Mansill & March Stepnik

Normally E3 concludes with a mere handful of amazing games left bouncing around inside our heads. No so this year! The 1999 Los Angeles E3 was comfortably the most potent collection of new games we've ever had the privilege of seeing. The good games are coming in force and Xmas will be the gamiest ever, but of this stunning collection, here's what blew us away in the most powerful way:

March's Best

1 Freelancer.

Microsoft

Only 'cause everyone else thinks so. Nah - just kidding. Chris Roberts was only demonstrating Freelancer to a select bunch of journalists from around the world. Ben and I were part of that bunch. Nothing could have prepared me for what I saw. It was more of an experience than a mere preview. The detail. The scope. The graphics. The atmosphere. Rekindled my interest in "A Chris Roberts game" and the ailing space combat genre.

Why is it special?

The original Privateer was a revelation and nothing since has topped it. Freelancer will, and in a way that will blow your mind.

2 Ultima IX: Ascension.

Origin

Who'd have thought? I almost had to pinch myself. After waiting five years for this one and following the many dramas that have plagued the development team on the way, it was an almost surreal experience to see it running before my eyes. From a fans' perspective, UIX bears all the hallmarks of a classic Ultima, and looks set to be a fitting conclusion to the series. From an RPG enthusiasts' perspective, UIX will prove that a game need not be laden with statistics to be considered a true RPG.

Considering my love/hate relationship with the game, the E3 demo left me speechless.

Why is it special?

It's an Ultima, geddit? Lord British is special, so Ultima IX has to be.

3 Giants

Planet Moon

Giants is big and beautiful. It's a quirky action game cum strategy game, with plenty of soul. Planet Moon have created a gaming universe so alive, you'll wish you were there. Each of the "races" you can play as are vastly different, yet Giants still feels on the whole, extremely balanced. A gaming masterpiece.

Why is it special?

How can you go wrong with a game bursting with this much charm and personality?

4 Deus Ex

Ion Storm

It's a shooter, but it's also an RPG. Apart from the totally immersive graphics and attention to detail (I'm talking painstaking here), it's the emphasis on consequences that has me salivating. The notion that the game world and its occupants hold you responsible for your actions is exciting stuff.

Why is it special?

One person: Warren Spector.

5 Thief 2

Looking Glass

Thief did it for me in ways I never thought possible, and the good news is that Thief 2 will be better. You reprise your role as Garrett and return to The City to continue your mysterious, wily ways. With a lot of focus on perfecting the AI, Thief 2 will usher in a new age of sleepless nights.

Why is it special?

It's a first person adventure where you aim to kill as few people as possible. Should say it all.

Ben's Best

1 Freelancer

Microsoft

"A Chris Roberts Game". Familiar words? If you've played Wing Commander 1, 2 or 3 they are. And Freelancer is Chris' vision of Wing Commander done right. Or more specifically, Privateer.

Although a good 2 years away from completion, this game looks finished and amazing as is.

Roberts is creating an enormous universe in which you can roam freely, taking up a variety of money making enterprises and generally playing forever, with no clear conclusion.

Why is it special?

The universe will be universal in size. The graphics are utterly stupendous.

2 Diablo 2

Blizzard

More than a mission disc - instead Diablo 2 is the full fresh coat of paint with glitter thrown in the mix. Totally revised interface, support for OpenGL and lush terrain that you want to wander around in.

Why is it special?

Relive the original Diablo joy with a ton of funky new features.

3 Homeworld

Sierra

Remember those paperback sci-fi novels from the 70's and 80's? The one's that artist Chris Foss illustrated with his unique style? Homeworld is like playing the game of the cover of the paperback. It feels like deep space, it

feels real and plausible, it looks absolutely incredible, it's blindingly easy to control, but devilishly hard to master. It's the best RTS I've ever seen and when Homeworld is released it'll blow your socks off.

Why is it special?

Homeworld is truly a new genre of game. And it's hard to imagine anything improving on the first off the rank.

4 Battlezone 2

Activision

A half-way hybrid between the struggling 3D RTS genre and the first-person ground war game.

Battlezone 2 has you ripping around the place in your Plasma Tank, ordering base construction and resource harvesting while fending off enemy attacks. Sensational.

Why is it special?

The original Battlezone done right.

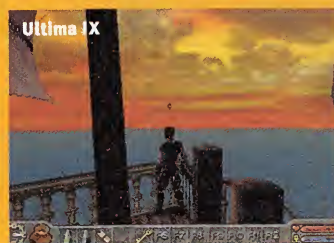
5 B-17 Flying Fortress 2

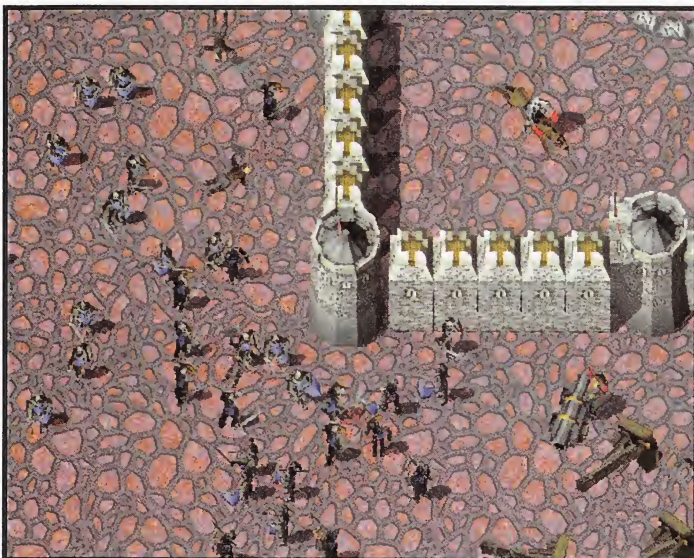
Microprose

Play it as a bomber sim, with you as pilot, and be happy. Play as any other of the 10 crew roles and be joyous. Play it as a 3D strategy game with you running up and down the fuselage giving orders and be in a whole new world. A true first for flight sims, and a top play for non-flighty gamers.

Why is it special?

Truly unique and new. One of the few games on show which I wanted to reach out and play hard there and then.





Total Annihilation: Kingdoms

From: Cavedog

Due: Very very soom

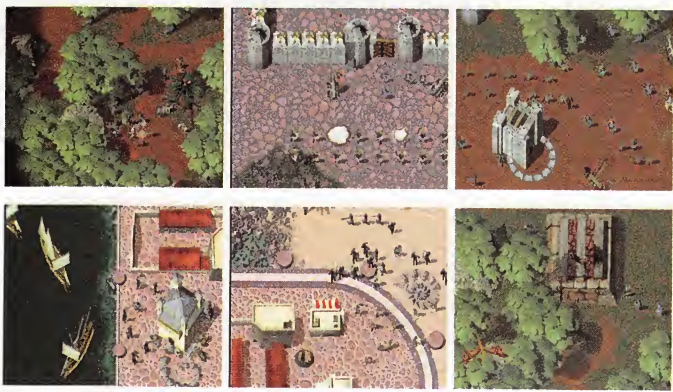
Superficially, yes, this is indeed Total Annihilation: Warcraft, but only in terms of a broad category classification. What our lengthy behind-closed-doors demo of Kingdoms revealed at E3, was a game that will lift the medieval RTS genre to new heights.

Just like the original TA did with sci-fi RTS games. Powered by a deep and compelling storyline, which we're not allowed to talk about just yet, details still being finalised and all, Kingdoms is set to dominate online play as well as offering a truly substantial single-player experience.

Again, the number of missions is not yet finalised, but there will be many more than the original TA. This, in part comes from there being four races to play from, two up from the original TA. Each race has particular attributes, naturally:

- **Aramon (Earth):** Pure white knights of virtue and gleaming armour. The forces of Aramon use land-based medieval units of the traditional variety. Strong technical abilities and high moral make up for a lack of fancy flying or magic units.
- **Veruna (Water):** These guys are natural seamen, being able to launch artillery bombardments as well as troop carrying vessels. Sounds like the boring race already...
- **Zhon (Fire):** The weird monster race. Zhon armies are made up from recruits from wandering creatures and outcasts. Their specialty is airborne superiority and guerilla warfare. Sounds like the fun race!
- **Taros (Fire):** Magic! Demons! Undead armies! Necromancy! Woo hoo!

While one look at Kingdoms is all it takes for you to know that this is the TA engine at work, much modification has gone into tailoring it to suit Kingdoms. Throughout the course of the single-player scenarios a detailed experience point system tracks the development of your units. Getting precious about heroes that we've carried through from the very first missions is something to get excited about! Also modified is the line-of-sight system, which gives far greater advantage to units on higher terrain. Other nice touches like a full-screen radar and more efficient build menus come together to make TA: Kingdoms not just one of the great games of this year's E3, but for the year in general. Next issue: full review.



Amen: The Awakening

From: GTI

Due: Xmas

We saw this at last year's E3 in the form of a technology demo that was a complete waste of time. This year though, what we saw was a ready to roll game that was seriously impressive. Yes it will support multiplayer, but the design priority here was for a quality single-player experience. Yay that.

Amen's thing is that it's set in recognisable urban environments. One scene sees you a helpless passenger on board a runaway subway train, which does a couple of jaw-dropping jumps over earthquaked chasms, eventually spinning out of control as it hits bridge supports. Of course, the idea is that you jump out at the last second...

Real weapons too, are modelled, in this 21st century world where you need to find out why the entire population has embraced the zombie way. More news on this potentially exciting game soon.



Deep Fighter

From: Ubisoft

Due: Almost there...

Not the official sequel to last year's Sub Culture (also Ubisoft), but actually it is. Heeding the cries of "game world too small!" and "just too cute, make it cooler!",

Ubisoft started from scratch to build the sub game for the masses.

Being a Ubisoft game, Deep Fighter has unavoidable elements of cute. While this is no sinister, apocalyptic world, there is a war on and it's all up to you, etc...

Sub-combat games are always a treat, and our viewing of Deep Fighter was a thrill. Waiting...



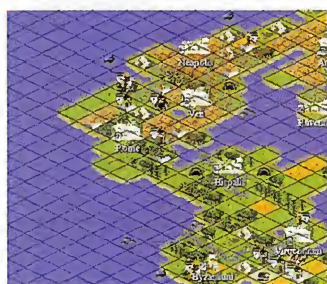
E3

Civilization II: Test of Time

From: Microprose

Due: Xmas.

For the Civ fan who wants it all, Test of Time is an interesting coming together of old and new that actually looks pretty damn good. On the Cd you will find the original Civ II, plus the two new Civworld Midgard and Lalande 21185. The former of the new bits is medieval magic territory, with Lalande being an ultra hightech future. Between these three worlds you will jump on the one game, developing multiple worlds which interact. The true test of this game will be in the playing, weird as it is. We plan to actually do this as soon as MicroProse deliver the beta we're currently begging for.



E3



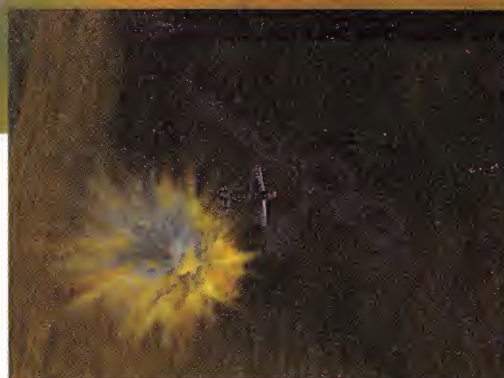
B-17: The Mighty Eighth

From: Microprose

Due: Xmas.

Now this is one seriously impressive game. MicroProse have created a WWII environment, centered around the legendary B-17 bomber, with the way you play the game entirely up to you. As a regulation flight sim it already looks like a winner. Pilot the B-17, or take up any of the 9 other crew position, or, switch to a fighter escort and protect the lads!

Or! Play it as a strategy game, moving through the body of the bomber, selecting various crewmembers, checking on their attributes and status then giving orders. This we like. It's also possible to play in a combination of modes - for example, taking over the gunners positions for the fun bits, thus negating the "99% boredom" factor. Sensational stuff.



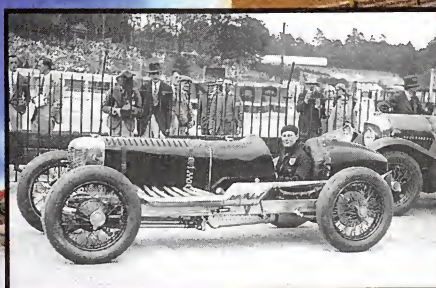
Spirit of Speed

From: Microprose

Due: Xmas.

It all started with the staggeringly wonderful Grand Prix Legends. Modern Formula 1 be damned! We've now got the taste for real racing and want more!

Spirit of Speed is based around the 1937 Championship Season,



and features cars such as the Bentley Blower, Bugatti and the 24 litre Napier Railton. These

beasts take a few miles to wind up to maximum velocity, have no brakes to speak of and will respond to a turbo 4-style change down with a mighty race-over engine explosion. Wonderful. Compared to Grand Prix Legends, this game is much, much easier to drive, which should hopefully wean a few Need for Speeders out of their plastic and kevlar and into sweat-drenched leather. Now this is racing!



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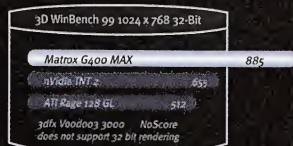
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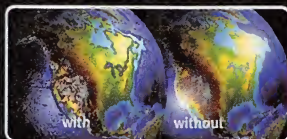
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Homeworld

From: Sierra
Due: Very soon



Delightful in its apparent simplicity, mesmerising in its startling originality and jaw-dropping for its 10/10 cool sci-fi design factor, Homeworld is The Game for hardcore sci-fi fans, with the Chris Foss inspired art, true sci-fi plot sans heroes and fluff, and most importantly; an epic sense of scale - you really do feel like an insignificant speck of carbon buried somewhere within the vastness of the universe, as opposed to most space sims, where even the shortsighted can see the end of the universe.

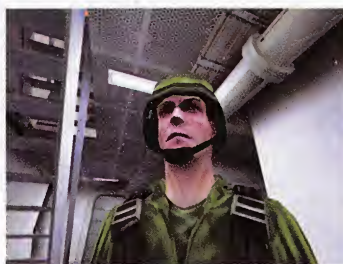
Homeworld is a 3D RTS. Yes, the ships are true 3D, but that's not the impressive bit, instead it's the fact that you play this space-based strategy game with full 3D control over your viewpoint. Being space, this sounds pretty sensible to us - other space RTS games cometh, such as Conquest from Microsoft, but they all allow only control and movement across a flat 2D plane. Homeworld, conversely, allows you to spin and zoom and generally dance around the combat zone with the most brilliant and deceptively simple interface we've ever seen. It's all mouse and cursor key based and works intuitively and without any penalty for speed or situational awareness. Zooming is particularly impressive. Doing the fast, maximum zoom-out gives you an instant all-universe strategic view. It's like switching to a game's main 'big picture' screen, but it's all in-game engine with zero wait. Besides being megahelpful for actually playing Homeworld, this just adds to the feeling that you're really controlling a small force forging slowly across a mighty universe.

It's different too from other games in the beauty and care put into the plot. Homeworld feels like a game built around a story, not the usual other way around. As with said epic size of the gameworld, this attention to plot further sucks you into a magnetically addictive game. The short version is that in the near future archaeologists discover the galactic equivalent of the Rosetta Stone - a map that suggests that humanity did not originate on Earth, but on another planet - "Homeworld". The map gives clues to Homeworld's location, but not specifically. That's where you come in. Commanding an Earth alliance fleet of combat/exploration ships, off you set to find Homeworld. Naturally you'll be plagued by aliens, pirates and all manner of space beasts along the way.

Homeworld rocks. It's the all-in-one perfect strategy game. Stay tuned for more gushing rants as development progresses.



E3



Team Fortress 2

From: Valve

Due: Xmas

Half Life used the Quake 2 engine, but so modified did it become that now it's the "Half-Life engine". Next in the evolution is the Team Fortress engine, based on said Half-Life engine. Confused? Relax! Here's the important bit: Team Fortress 2 is a purely online-only/multiplayer game based on co-operation between human teammates. Each team member plays as a distinct soldier-type with pros and cons, but all must work together to achieve victory. The gameplay is conventional modern warfare inspired. As such, expect Normandy-style beach assaults and other WWII scenarios. These lads are talented though, as well as being hardcore deathmatch addicts, and from Team Fortress 2 we expect nothing less than the multiplayer game of the year.



Gabriel Knight III:

Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned

From: Sierra

Due: Xmas

'Family company' Sierra turned to the dark side a few years ago, by hiring designer Jane Jensen, whose penchant for the sinister and gothic was celebrated by fans with her first Gabriel Knight adventure game. #2 was more of the same, which we applauded, and now version 3 looms. All-new is the 3D engine, which looks as dark and foreboding as we would wish. Aside from creating a more involving game-world, the new engine also allows for NPCs to run around and play out their lives independent of your actions, creating an environment which feels more real; more tangible.

Most interestingly is the move to 3D itself. Sensible, yes, but Sierra, long-time purveyors of the 2D adventure game, staunchly stuck with the 2D backdrop. Now that they're going the 3D way, we shall just assume that all new games, regardless of genre, will be in 3D from now on.



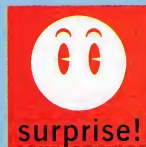
Diablo II

From: Blizzard

Filled with healthy journalistic scepticism, we fronted up wearily to the Blizzard stand for the obligatory Diablo II show-and-tell. Expecting nothing more than an enhanced mission-pack, we eventually made good our escape almost 2 hours later (a major time-investment, E3-wise).

Where to start?! Gone are the dreary, repetitive and seemingly endless catacombs of varying shades of grey and brown! Thrill as you now wander through lush outdoor settings, marvel at the intricately detailed indoor Persian settings, peruse leisurely the busy marketplace scenes and delve deep into catacombs done with flair and style. While all but the city scenes are still randomly generated, they sure don't look it. The forest levels, for example, look as hand-drawn and carefully crafted as the best out there, but the lot is a randomly computer generated world.

Talking flash special effects; never before have we set eyes upon a sexier set of high 'wow-factor' pyrotechnics. Half the fun in the original Diablo



was laying on the firepower and appreciating the greatness of your character's power via pretty frameworks. Diablo II supports (optionally) Glide and D3D. A bit strange for a 2D game, yes, but oh the pretty colours! You'll like, you will. The other manifestation of hardware acceleration is that, when enabled, more effective parallax scrolling kicks in. That is, the multiple layers of backgrounds move against each other as you journey on, creating a greater sense of depth and perspective.

Subtle and very, very nice.

While not a complete mess, the original's interface did possess the potential to get in the way during



fierce melee bouts. Not any more! While superficially similar, the new hot key commands and general fine tuning, including stacked inventories, make warfaring more

about warfaring, not mouse and key ballet.

There will be 5 character classes this time around, with each possessing a unique 'spell tree'. As you play on, you can allocate experience points to spells and tricks that suit your playing style - possibly ignoring some completely, while maxing-out your favourites. It's all presented in a very logical flowchart-style display, and is reason enough to warrant repeat plays of the same character class, changing playing style completely each time.

Fired up with an all-new interest and enthusiasm for Diablo II, we'll endeavour to get our hands on a beta as soon as possible. So we can report more for you, dear reader, of course.

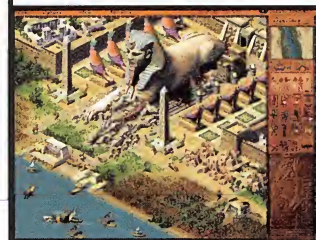


Pharaoh

From: Impressions

Due: Soon

We all loved Caesar III (PCPP #31, 88%). This resource focussed real-time sim game held us captive for many weeks. Little blokes running around little buildings never looked so good, or played so deeply. Pharaoh is nothing more than Caesar III in Egypt. Which pleases us greatly. The general colour scheme has gone from granite grey to sphinx yellow, and the interface has a lovely tomb of the ancients fresco look about it. Seeing as we don't know jack about the day to day life and social infrastructure of ancient Egypt, and assuming the quality of the gameplay will be as tasty as Caesar, we look forward to immersing ourselves in another winner from Impressions.



Battlezone II

From: Activision

Due: Xmas

Critically acclaimed and a sales flop, Battlezone was and is a truly great game, which unfortunately suffered due to, we presume, a lack of understanding as to what it was really all about. And that, quite simply, was a first-person RTS. Rip around in techno-tanks, build typical RTS structures and join in the fray when attacking or being attacked. Lovely stuff.

Bravely forging ahead, Activision commendably chose to further refine the concept. Being good listeners, they addresses the original game's shortcoming and have created the Battlezone that we should have had in the first place.

Now, the interface is greatly simplified, allowing for speedy base-building and unit commands. More care too has been taken with the geography - in the original game the maps were short on large, flat areas for base-building, with messy congestion resulting in the later stages of the game. And that's about it. Fantastic! Of course, being a new game and all, it looks a million times better - no mean feat. The artists have come up with fresh and innovative terrain and alien units, as with the original, this Battlezone is eye candy to the max, but now has the gameplay to match. Hang in there... this will be worth the wait.

Starsiege Tribes II

From: Dynamix

Due: Soonish

Being a predominantly online game, the priorities for this sequel are smoother and smarter net code and AI. All good and well, we appreciate that, but all we could think about were the startling new 3D graphics. This game did not need a graphics overhaul in any way, but ahead

they went and now the lush hills roll well into the distance with not a single flat surface to be seen. Texturing too is gorgeous and the snappy new interface is a dream to manipulate in a busy combat environment.



E3

E3

Flight Sim 2000

From: Microsoft
Due: Xmas

Our children's children will be playing Microsoft Flight Sim in some form, but as far as their problems are concerned, that's the least of your worries.

FS 2000 features a bunch of relatively exciting new aircraft, including

the Concorde. As expected. The Big News, though, is the (FINALLY!) all-new graphics engine. Never before did the Sears Tower look so pretty! No more flat surfaces for hours and hours either. Rolling, lumpy hills with gorgeous textures make FS 2000 an essential upgrade for PC Pilots.



Babylon 5

Space Combat Simulator

From: Sierra
Due: Xmas

Think Wing Commander whilst lost in your personal favourite Bab5 fantasy (with you, naturally, as the hero), and you've got the abovenamed game. A 30 minute (longer than usual at the frantic E3) playtest of this baby was a treat. Standout features are the sheer enormity of the capital ships, together with their funky design.

While much fanfare is being steered towards the fact that the in-game ships are effectively the same computer generated models as that used in the show, I had to ask if the game was running in software mode or not, so disappointing were the textures. Nevermind, it's Bab5 innit? And for many/most, that'll be all, thanks.



Loose Cannon

From: Digital Anvil
Due: Sometime

Digital Anvil is the Microsoft-owned Brothers Roberts (Chris and Erin) show. Loose Cannon is their flagship title. Call it a "real-world mercenary simulator" - we do, for that's what it is. It's set in real cities, which look real, but go bush and you can keep driving through the outback for as long as it suits you. Lovely. You play Some Guy who operates with the reluctant support of the law, hunting down errant criminals, infiltrating bases and the like. Combat is medium paced and mostly strategic in nature - sniping laser trip-wires to access a base, etc. As with Interstate '82, this is neither a driving nor a walking game, but both. Just do whatever suits the occasion.

Looking very good, very early, we guesstimate that it will be Xmas next year before you see the Loose Cannon icon on your Win 2000 desktop.



Desert Fighters

From: Dynamix
Due: 1st QTR 00

"Bring back Damon Slye" we begged, to which Phil Cowes, current Dynamix Marketing head just smiled knowingly. Damon founded Dynamix and brought us the all-time classics Aces of the Pacific and Aces over Europe. Then, just as the legend was setting, he took off, never to be heard from again! What the hey!

The Dynamix name, though, is in safe hands. Cowes and the rest of the team understand the Dynamix philosophy of all game-play and minimal fluff and with their forthcoming WWII sim set in the North African campaign, rest assured that Dynamix is getting air once again.

The yellow sands of Africa make a nice change to the regulation green or Iraqi mud-brown that we're all getting bored with. Low passes over the Sphinx, twisting around the pyramids, all while being pursued by some lunatic in a Focke-Wulf. The stuff of dreams! At E3 Sierra put on a large-scale LAN test and all who flew, us included, walked away wanting more, now.

Dark Reign 2

From: Activision
Due: 1st-2nd QTR 2000

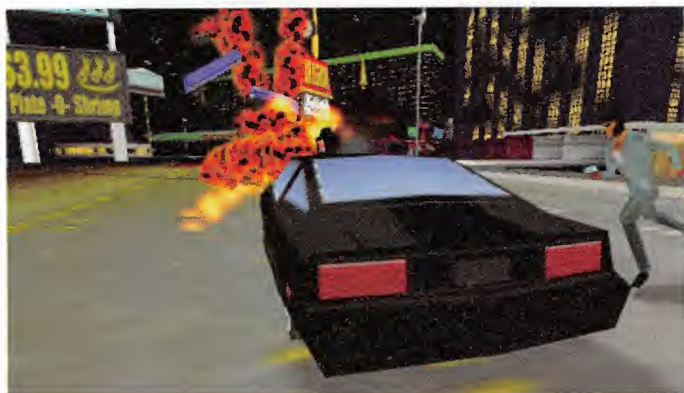
Unlike Activision's Battlezone II, where the original concept was fine-tuned and perfected, the Dark Reign 2 team took stock of their original game's faults, and then proceeded to chuck the lot out the window and start completely from scratch.

Meaning, of course, that it's now in full 3D. Well duhhh! Now, there are more than a few 3D RTS games coming soon, and all of them concern us to varying degrees because of the inherently cumbersome interface required. Situational awareness is usually a major casualty in 3D RTS games, which is just plain stupid and weird, seeing as the switch to 3D ought to provide the full 'being there' effect.



Luckily for you, us and Activision, Dark Reign II looks like the goods. Starting with an all-new and highly detailed (and fast!) 3D engine, the Pandemic team (the developers) have taken their time perfecting the all-important control method. From the E3 demo we ascertained that the press release was indeed factual, and that fast and intuitive control is in the game.

It's early days yet, and we'll watch this one closely, as should you too.



Interstate '82

From: Activision

Due: Soonish

To many, the biggest news is that the cut-scene characters now have moving mouths, but we're serious journalists here, so let's have a deeper look...

The overall game design is identical - that is, a sequence of short missions that abruptly end the nanosecond your objective is achieved, all set to a retro soundtrack (think 'Devo' this time around...). Same too are the almost real-looking, but fictional array of American muscle cars, all upgradable from the shop or

salvage. Not the same, is the ability to park your car, get out and go for a walk - tres cool! De-holster your sidearm and deal out personal justice from a Quake-view, then make good your escape in your waiting V8 rumbler. Cool cool cool cool.

The graphics engine is completely new, thank the heavens. Now it's smooth and beautiful, just like the characters you'll meet in the game. The original I 76 didn't exactly set the sales charts on fire, so bless Activision for pressing on with the devilishly charismatic gameworld.



Starlancer

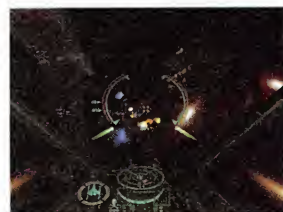
From: Microsoft

Due: Soon

Read about Chris Roberts' Freelancer elsewhere in this report, but seeing as that game is at least 2 years away we shall take a look at a space combat sim that's closer to completion.

Quality. That was the word that circulated in our E3-weary brains as we wandered from the Microsoft stand. The attention to detail in Starlancer is phenomenal. From the cutscenes to the mission briefing sessions to the godalmighty spaceship to the outrageously funky weapon effects - this game reeks of the Right Stuff. Blow a passenger liner and delight as you fly through the debris, which includes not only ship-bits, but blasted body-bits too! Sensational!

Of particular likeability was the 3D cockpit, its simplicity itself, while still providing you with the required data. We also



loved the way the cockpit moved gently to reflect G-forces on the pilots body. Also nice is the 'hands-on-joy-stick' display in the cockpit which moves corresponding to your input. Yes yes, we know that all the Wing Commander's have been there and done that, but it still looks great.

More Star Trek stuff! We can't get enough!

A quick poll of the PCPP crew revealed that, unanimously, we feel deep in our hearts that all things Star Trek, well, suck. However, dutifully obliged by Sect. 19, sub-sect. 27B of the Journalists Code of Ethics, which, in part, reads: "...thou shall not let any or all personal prejudices against the Star Trek universe permeate any editorial, regardless of how crappy and endlessly derivative it may seem..." we press on and report the following:

Great news! There's a veritable ton of new Star Trek games coming! Fantastic! Most of them come from the fine people at Activision, who really ought to know better... First up to the chopping block is Star Trek: Insurrection. Loosely based on the film, not that we'd know, so blind and blinkered is our prejudice that we don't even need to see the flick to know that... (STOP NOW! Ed.). Right then. Insurrection is an adventure game of the



static 2D background, animated 3D character variety. Consciously aware of the potential pitfalls, the Activision crew pointed out repeatedly that one needn't be a fan of the ST thing to get a blast out of this undeniable fine looking game. Meet and interact with your favourite ST characters - BE your favourite ST character! Puzzle solve, do simple combat, hear the soundtrack loop endlessly. How good is that!



Of more interest is Star Trek Voyager: Elite Forces, also from Activision. This one is being built using the Quake III engine and

the quality shows. Primarily a single-player experience, the graphics look the part, with dull, sterile, angular architecture and that ever-present muffled electric motor hum. Of the lot, we found Elite Forces the most gratifying play, not at all because when the Activision guy looked away we ran amok shooting the entire Federation crew.

Of the Homeworld/Conquest variety of

emerging 3D space RTS games comes Star Trek: Armada. Hey! It's an Activision game! Looks tops too, truly. Not quite as complex, or pretty, as Homeworld, Armada nevertheless beckoned with a seemingly well balanced mix of researching, exploration and medium-paced combat.

All fine games, no doubt there at all. Unfortunately, the statement we wish to conclude this section with is also expressly prohibited by the Journalists Code of Ethics, Sect. 56, sub-sect. 13D: "When concluding a computer game report, one shall not lame out and state: 'If you're into this sort of thing, check it out!'"

E3



Heavy Gear II

From: Activision

Due: Sometime

Like Mechwarrior, but they're called "Gears" instead of "Mechs". Like Heavy Gear 1, but friendlier and less hardcore. Like Starsiege in its multiplayer beauty. Not like Mechwarrior 3, which looks completely different, but that's only due to a different graphics engine, and perhaps less of a focus on Activision's part on creating a 'sim', but more of a fantasy world game.

Like Quake, almost, in that Gears are more agile and manoeuvrable than most Mechs, plus playing it just feels more like zipping around in a FPS, rather than a ponderously stompy Mech game. We think we'll like it and hope you do too.

Age of Empires: Age of Kings

From: Ensemble Studios

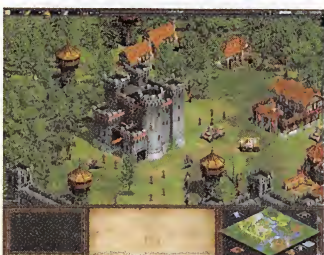
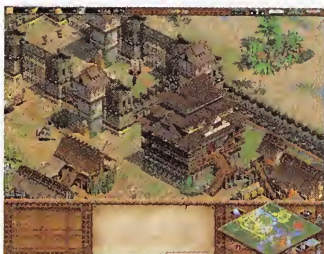
Due: Soon-Xmas

Microsoft's star title for Xmas, Age 2 will deliver, that we can confidently promise. Company founder, lead designer and 100% Nice Guy Bruce Shelly is taking his time with this all-important sequel, and for that we're grateful.

Normally with strategy games we overlook any excessive prettiness and focus on the gameplay - well, not this time. Age 2 is so gosh darn pretty - well, you remember how impressed with the original you were?

We can't accurately report on the gameplay yet, as it's all being finetuned, but expect a far heavier emphasis on resource management and diplomacy. Of course, if that's not your thing feel free to customise the game rules to suit your style. Yay Bruce!

Lots more news on this sure-fire winner coming soon.



Giants: Citizen Kabuto

From: Planet Moon Studios

Due: 3rd Qtr 99

Giants is going to be absolutely huge [sic]. Created by part of the team that worked on MDK.

Giants is part action, part strategy game with personality to spare. In fact, it's this personality that is indelibly Giants' greatest feature. The characters created are not only beautifully designed, but functional as well. Example:

Kabuto is a big giant creature with menacing gape and huge tusks emerging from his body. Kabuto needs sheepy things for energy. Kabuto picks up sheepy thing and skewers it on his tusk for later snacking. As Kabuto goes about dominating the game



world, sheepy thing wriggles and writhes, dripping blood on the landscape. Gah! It's hard to get past the visuals and detail of Giants! It's absolutely brilliant! Ultimately an action/strategy game, Giants allows you to play through 3 very different races throughout a variety of detailed missions and stunning game environments. Expect to hear more about Giants in the very near future.

Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun

From: Westwood

Due: 3rd Qtr 99

Rejoice! It's not vapourware! While there was never any real danger of Tiberian Sun disappearing from our known universe, there was a brief period of paranoia concerning its release. Well, it's on its way and it should be on our shores within the next month or two. As far as the E3 display, Tiberian Sun appeared almost identical in presentation to that of C&C and Red Alert, with Westwood opting to keep things familiar and friendly. While this



scared away the arrogant many, PCPP can proudly report that Tiberian Sun will be all that C&C fans could have hoped for and more. Featuring all new graphics effects and a dynamic environment system, the enhancements to the RTS genre are too many to list. Will no doubt rock the multiplayer world too.



E3

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HASBRO
Interactive



Ultima IX: Ascension

From: Origin

Due: 4th Qtr 99

First thing's first. Since last years E3, the elusive "IX" that had disappeared from the title of the tenth (if you include Ultima 7 Part II - The Serpent Isle) successive Ultima title has made a come back. This is sure to relieve a growing number of fans concerned that Richard Garriott (creator of the series and Producer of Ascension) was diluting the traditional Ultima essence in favour of a more palatable and marketable product. After a brief tour through Britannia itself, cast your fears aside. UIX:A is on the right track and in capable hands. Accessible, yet chock full of all the goodness that made Ultima famous in the first place. Origin claim it'll be ready by Xmas, but considering they've yet to hit alpha and still have their fare share of optimisation issues to deal with, we don't expect this one 'til early next year.

E3



Messiah

From: Shiny

Due: 3rd qtr. 99

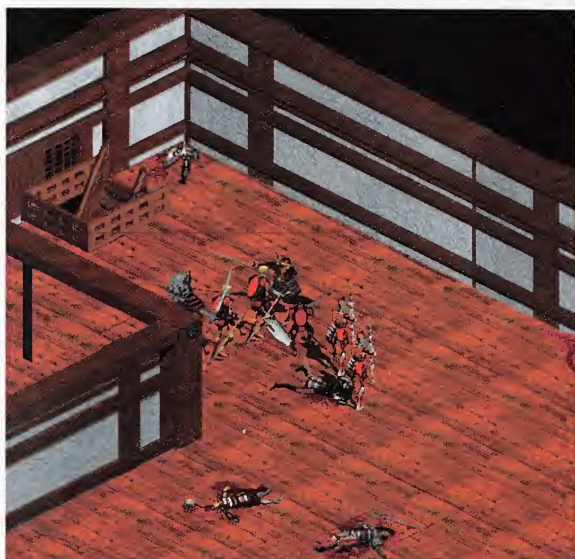
Messiah is almost done! Let it be known! Although it can be argued that Shiny made the mistake of boasting Messiah's magic far too early in the development cycle, they can and will be totally forgiven thanks to one of the most impressive action titles present at E3 99. Playing the part of Bob, an angel sent down to right the many



wrongs on Earth, you are thrust into a massively detailed world where the visual effects beautifully enhance the rich gameplay. Since Bob has no access to weaponry, he must possess others with the firepower to progress through the game. The effects as you possess a hapless guard or let loose in a full-blown fire fight are spectacular. The scaleable graphics technology, aka "realtime deformation tessellation", which has been praised industry-wide yet dubiously scruti-



nised was on show. Reading about it can't prepare you for seeing it in action. Thanks to Shiny's hard work on the code side of things, Messiah is an action game that features not only a compelling story and beautiful graphics, but supports an unprecedented number of characters in the same area than any other action game to date. Shiny and Dave Perry gush pride whilst talking Messiah, and rightfully so. Could be action game of the year.



Throne of Darkness

From: Click Entertainment

Due: Early 2000

Of all the Diablo clones we saw at the show, Acclaim's Throne of Darkness was one of the most impressive. And why not? The development team features two key members of the original Diablo team, and that's gotta mean something, right? Click Entertainment. Make note of that name because you'll be hearing a lot more about them in the near future. Using a similar perspective to the venerable Diablo, Throne of Darkness details the exploits of seven Samurai warriors, a dark warlord, and a legion of demons from Japanese mythology. Which is a perfect alternative to that of typical western fantasy settings.

While at the heart of this game lies a point and click affair, ToD contains an noteworthy set of features that will surely raise eyebrows amongst the action RPG fans. ToD allows you to control a party of four Samurai at a time, with each of them harbouring unique personalities, character traits and abilities, as well as a detailed history. As far as the single player experience goes, after hunting down the Dark Warlord and ending his reign, you will then take his place and fight to keep your position. This will translate directly into multiplayer, where groups of players fight for the title of Dark Warlord, which will result in access to a whole stack of new powers and abilities. The down side is that you'll have the rest of the multiplayer contingent out for your blood. Great stuff.



The Sims

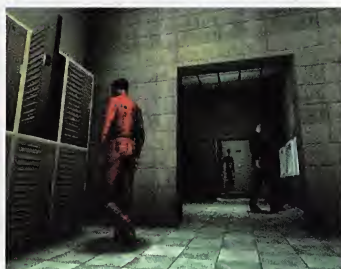
From: Maxis

Due: End 99

There was something odd about The Sims. On paper it seems rather amusing, or at least, intriguing. However, nothing can prepare you for witnessing The Sims in action. You've got free reign as the player to not only create an alter ego but guide this character through a completely virtual life. The detail is incredible. Watch as your intrepid goon settles down to a plate of nachos, then washes up after himself. Observe him disrobe and jump into the shower for the weekly wash. Feel your heart crumble as the love of your life rejects your proposal of marriage. And it goes much deeper than that too. Not to mention fornication. The amount of detail Maxis has gone into is almost disturbing. Maxis have also given the player the option of using custom made skins for the characters appearance. The possibilities are endless (Maxis were displaying a range of college students wearing Quake skins). Now anyone can have a girlfriend that looks like Catherine Zeta Jones!

Success is measured by how happy your alter egos are, and at this stage happiness comes with a larger home, pay rises, and of course, the number of cars you own. For those more spiritually minded, The Sims may end up to be more open-ended in goal structure.

If The Sims won't satisfy your voyeuristic tendencies, then nothing will.



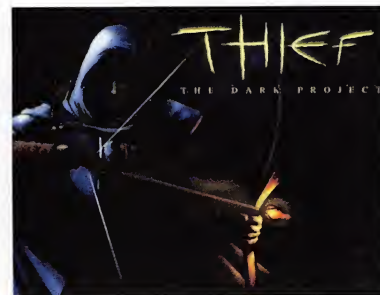
Thief 2 The Metal Age

From: Looking Glass Studios

Due: Early 2000

Quite literally a few days after the formal announcement that a sequel to Thief: The Dark Project was underway, the Looking Glass boffins made the pilgrimage to E3 to shout it from the rooftops. While at first glance looking almost identical to The Dark Project, Thief 2: The Metal Age will feature a number of breathtaking enhancements. First up is a general AI overhaul - guards (and other humans) will behave much more realistically than ever. They'll now be more surreptitious, and keenly aware of their surroundings. Guards not at their posts or a sudden (or even gradual) lack of lighting (thanks to your trusty water arrows) will now arouse suspicion. Guards will also re-light torches, which not only makes the game feel more realistic, but will force the would-be thief in us all to come up with alternative solutions to apparently simple problems. Monsters have been culled back in favour of more sinister human characters, which should be great news for the great number of people that thought the undead contingent were tacked on to the original. Dynamic lighting is now in - so when you launch a fire arrow from your bow down a dimly lit hallway, its glow will briefly play on the surrounds for the duration.

Looking Glass are aiming at perfecting the single player experience that was offered in The Dark Project, and will incorporate a more compelling and intricate storyline to immerse the player. They're also giving multiplayer a stab, with a co-op mode to be included in Thief 2. Playing through the same missions as the single player game, LG haven't yet decided how they'll implement a co-op mode that will do the experience justice.



E3

Tomb Raider IV

From: Core Design

Due: Can't come soon enough

Core design were keeping details of Lara's mysterious fourth outing close to their chests. Which was a surprise considering the almost overwhelming PR presence Lara had at the show. Yes, both Laras were there and they both did a splendid job of roping hapless attendees to the Eidos stand. Her presence was a surprise considering that TR4 was only being demonstrated to prospective investors, behind closed doors. Hey! The gaming press are a forgiving bunch! What gives?

What is known that was that its subtitle may be "Lara's final adventure". Er... Shame? We also received confirmation that the Tomb Raider engine "will be changed". What isn't clear is how much.



Deus Ex

From: Ion Storm

Due: Early 2000

Ahh.. To be taken through a game of this calibre by a man of this stature. Yes, PowerPlay got to meet a living, breathing gaming god. After the hot flushes subsided and we steadied our appendages, Warren Spector took us through Deus Ex - which has to be one of the most promising RPGs to emerge from this year's E3. Yes it uses the Unreal engine and yes many people have coined it merely a "thinking person's shooter" as a result, but Deus Ex will deliver a magical gaming experience. While it does have an aspect of action to it, Deus Ex is first and foremost an RPG. With so much to say and not enough space, expect a full preview next issue.



E3



Theme Park World

From: Bullfrog
Due: End 2000

Theme Park's back. With Rollercoaster Tycoon showing us just how much interest there was left in fun park sims, the creators of the one that started it all have returned with a sequel. Theme Park World is now fully 3D, and will allow players to jump into the first person perspective of

any person in the park, as well as taking a ride on any of the attractions you've built. The presentation is pure Bullfrog, with many passers by commenting that perhaps the quirky style was a little too over the top. Still, it's Theme Park, 3D.



Vampire: The Masquerade Redemption

From: Activision
Due: Early 2000

Based on the White Wolf RPG, The Masquerade is an RPG almost frightening in scope. The attempt: to successfully bring paper-based role-playing to the PC. Giving the DM much greater freedom to change the worlds settings and alter the game's goals, DM's can also jump into any NPC within the game to help enrich the game-play experience. Beautifully presented with plenty of detail, The Masquerade will appeal more to paper based RPG fans. Shares the top spot with Deus Ex and Ultima IX: Ascension, as RPG of the show.

I-War: Deluxe Edition

From: Infogrames
Due: Soon

Nebula effect - check. Large scale ships - check. I-War is back in the form of this deluxe edition, which features a whole new campaign titled "Defiance". This time you switch sides, taking action against the Commonwealth. Joyous stuff. As well as 18 new missions, you get new weapons classes and the ability to select the weapon loadout. The Deluxe Edition also promises an enhanced graphics engine and in-game save points.

Particle Systems (the developers of I-War) did announce that a sequel was in the works, which would, in their own words, "completely redefine the space combat



genre". If you consider I-War a warm-up, then they might just be able to pull it off. Expect this one mid 2000. Also in the works is a novel based on the I-War universe, as well as a bunch of other I-War

related products spanning different media types. Prepare yourself for plenty of I-War in the near future.

Planet of the Apes

From: Fox Interactive
Due: End 99

And no. We still would have gushed at the Planet of The Apes stand even if their stand didn't happen to feature a pair of beautifully ragged women in huge dome cage (ahhh... dreams do come true). We still would have cast our attention to the game even if Fox didn't go the trouble of decking out a handful of its lackeys in full Planet of The Apes costumes. For Planet of the Apes is a 3rd person action adventure title that absolutely reeks quality. Playing the part of Ulysses you crash land on an uncharted planet 1,000 years in the future. Needless to say, things aren't right. All those monkeys! Rather than focusing on action elements, Fox Interactive have attempted to bring a cinematic feel to the game. Expect plenty of dialogue and interaction with computer controlled characters. With the Planet of the Apes revival well under way, this game is set to add to the magic.



Master Hunter

From: EA

Due: Sometime soon

The reason we hate hunting sims? They're but dolled-up versions of the classic carnival shooting saloon. Flat, dull, and lifeless. Not so with Master Hunter though!

EA held back while the market flooded itself with sub-standard "Deer Hunter" clones, beavered away at a exceptional piece of gaming code, and revealed their hand at just the right time. Rather than reeking of novelty, Master Hunter seems to be pure quality.

It will do for the hunting genre what Half-Life did for the action shooter. Featuring lush and complex gaming environments, the attention paid to presentation and immersion is almost disconcerting. You'll almost expect your prey to start shooting back. It's about time gaming developers took this genre seriously. We can't wait to get our hands on this one. We kid you not.



Outcast

From: Infogrames

Due: Late '99

Using the much touted Voxel engine (which uses software rendering), this was one of the rare few action/adventure games present at E3 that wasn't powered by a 3D accelerator. Claiming that a PII is all you'll need to enjoy this game with a respectable frame rate, the folks at the Outcast stood proudly by their French born and bred title. There was, however, something slightly off-putting about it. Fine, there's something special about



scaling a great height and being able to see the landscape stretch out as far as the (in-game) eye could see. But the character movement and general visual quality appears to be the trade off. Still, the adventure elements seem to bear the magical touch of the French so we'll be keeping a close eye on this one as it develops.

Star Wars Stuff

From: LucasArts

And here they come. While Star Trek titles out-numbered the Star Wars ones 10 to 1, LucasArts managed to announce four new Star Wars titles.

The first two come from Lucas Learning, and will complement the recently announced Gungan Frontier edutainment title. Pit Droids is a puzzle game featuring those pesky and lemming-like droids from the pod race segment of Episode 1. Players will be able to create their own puzzles too and post these on the 'Net for others to play. The other title is Yoda's Challenge, which aimed at the young ones and takes



them through math, reading and music activities.

For the rest of us, there's Episode 1: Insider's Guide and Episode 1: Obi Wan. The Insider's Guide is much like last year's Behind the Magic, featuring all the information, artwork and sound bytes from Episode 1 you could want.

As for Episode 1: Obi Wan - consider this the unofficial Dark Forces 3. Playing the part of Obi Wan, this first person shooter takes you through some of the events seen in Episode 1, as well as delving further into the undiscovered areas of the Episode 1 universe. With only a short video shown at E3, details are scant. That said, LucasArts remain confident that Obi Wan will further enhance the single player first person shooter experience.



Whatever, it's Star Wars and it looks amazing. Expect this one early next year.

LucasArts haven't neglected the classic Star Wars stuff either. Force Commander has made a comeback, though it's undergone a few design changes along the way. While it's still a 3D real time strategy game, LucasArts have decided to drop the resource management/base building aspect that was initially planned. Instead, you command pre-allocated units through a stack of missions on all manner of familiar Star Wars locations.



E3

STATE OF PLAY

The lowdown on the
latest in your
favourite genre

Adventure/RPG

David J. Wildgoose

What I'm waiting for:

Gabriel Knight 3 - August

System Shock 2 - August

Deus Ex - December

The renaissance of the role-playing game seems assured throughout the rest of the year and well into the next. Riding the wave of popularity generated by *Baldur's Gate*, the likes of *Planescape: Tormont*, *Diablo 2* and Microsoft's newly-announced *Pool Of Radiance* game should all prove successful in commercial terms at least. It's certainly not coincidental that many of the anticipated RPGs are based upon existing role-playing systems. Despite now being well into its dotage, AD&D remains a highly bankable brand name. Though whether games that



have licensed newer and more sophisticated rules can compete with the same nostalgia market is perhaps questionable. Familiarity tends to triumph in such situations.

Will there be an adventure game renaissance as well? On the evidence thus far, it would be hard to say yes. Yet the presence of the enjoyable *Discworld Noir* reviewed in this issue makes it equally hard to argue that the genre is entirely dead. The undeniable fact remains, however, that traditional adventure games do not sell in significant numbers - especially in the US. Various European developers still seem committed to the cause, but on the other side of the Atlantic there's really only *Gabriel Knight 3* on the horizon. And no matter how impressive that game is shaping up to be (and, believe me, it's sounding better each day), the future doesn't look at all promising.

The lauding of recent action games (*Half-Life*, most notably) that have endeavoured to relate an engaging story surely means that an audience for narrative-driven games does exist. Developers just need to work out how to present that desired plot to us in a compelling form. Where the future of narrative-driven gameplay may then lie is in the current crop of hybrid titles. From the action-oriented end of the spectrum (think *Indiana Jones*, *Outcast* and *Galleon*) to more RPG-influenced stylings (*Deus Ex*, *Vampire*, *System Shock 2*), there are plenty of games with sufficient potential to please those gamers who appreciate the finer aspects of character interaction, problem solving and a storyline.

Action

Edwin T.A. Dawson III

Q3TEST, the Quake 3 technology (multi-player only) demo has been the buzz of the month, what with slaving action gamers globally downloading it and gettin' it on in a big way.

It looks extremely polished for a test game, but John Carmack is still radically adjusting the player movement and weapon balancing to make it more fun and balanced in a fun sort of way. Recent news whispers the inclusion of a flame-thrower, and by jingo we're keen to get a look at that baby, considering the stellar pyrotechnics the other weapons have got. Q3test plays extremely well, it's fast, basic, pure deathmatch fun. The networking code is just unbelievable: a 300 ping is a lagged game, but so consistently,



evenly lagged that you can time and anticipate Railgun hits. This is amazing stuff. Hats off to id, they've really done it again. **Q3 Capture The Flag** (Q3CTF) looks to be bundled with the main game, or at least following close behind, which is more very good news.

MECHWARRIOR 3 is looking bloody fantastic, and it's got a whole new dimension of military kinda of stuff in it. It's visually breathtaking, while keeping all of the realism and concise simulation we've come to expect from the series. This will be ripping up LAN parties countrywide when it comes out.

www.mechwarrior3.com

To tide you over until the release of Aussie-designed **Team Fortress 2**, the Epic boys have made a valiant effort at a strategy-first person shooter in **Unreal Tournament**.

Shipping with a voluminous number of maps and extremely polished Bots, it's an excellent single-player practice game, as you can play a full 8 Vs 8 game with Bots comprising both allies and enemies. It's rife with awesome TF style scenarios, and it's a very slick production, but unfortunately it has not travelled very far from the reasons Unreal was not much chop as a multi game.

unrealtournament.com

In other very exciting news, **Action Half-Life** is nearly finished. It's a new and improved version of the hugely popular multiplayer Mod that brought real ballistics and actual weapons to Quake2. Reloading, wound ballistics modeling, Karate kicks, bandaging, silent-slippers and submachine guns are the order of the day. It's definitely worth checking out.

ahl.action-web.net/

Strategy

B. Adam Robinson

Current Game Versions:

Myth 2: v1.2

Alpha Centauri: 3.0

Civilisation: Call to Power: 1.1

This month I'll be discussing emerging trends in the Strategy genre. The most obvious of these is the evolution from what were once purely 2D Real Time Strategy (RTS) titles to games now utilising full 3D units and terrain. **Total Annihilation** was the first game to make the transition, though it is technically classified as a quasi-3D RTS due to its 3D units and 2D terrain. Since then countless others have followed in a course of action that will inevitably lead to the death of the 2D RTS game. Of course this raises the question of the survival of upcoming titles



like **Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun**. The popularity of the C&C franchise will undoubtedly ensure comfortable retail sales performance, but how the game will fare in the long run, in the face of stiff competition from the likes of **Total Annihilation:**

Kingdoms, is the question on many people's lips. It's also interesting to consider the actual effect on gameplay quality that this transition from 2D to 3D has had. Thus far, this transition has provided largely cosmetic benefits, but little else. However, with the approaching tidal wave of RTS games, many consumers may be pleasantly surprised.

Another industry-wide trend is the convergence of many of the traditional game genres. Over the years the once clearly defined line between these genres has become increasingly blurred. Games like **Tom Clancy's Rainbow 6**, with its unique blend of First Person Shooter (FPS) and tactical gaming traits, pioneered this muddying of the genre waters. This trend has inevitably spread to other sectors, with half a dozen titles combining tactical and RTS gaming due for release in the coming months. For many this is a welcome and long overdue change, and it will undoubtedly be received with open arms.

With the ever increasing power of today's processors and 3D accelerator cards, speculation regarding the future of the gaming industry is running rife. What we're witnessing now is a gradual shift in the gaming paradigm. That said, the future for Strategy gamers and gaming in general is looking decidedly bright.

Sims

Maj. Ian Lindgren

What do I think the future will hold for military simulations in the next 12 months? Here's my opinion.

We'll see a gradual fading out of the scripted or "canned" mission game. Let's face it, these are boring, you get 30 odd missions, each of which can be flown at, say, three difficulty levels. That's still 30 missions isn't it? Random dynamic mission generation is the future, with each mission following one of three or four campaign threads. Sounds good value to me, and games with this capability have scored the highest in the past 12 months.

More AI controlled enemy, friendly and neutral forces. I think that the Balkans crisis will push developers into scripting neutral



forces in the spotlight of gameplay in modern era simulations. They are a factor to consider in the 21st century battlespace. How do you identify them, how do you avoid collateral damage, how do you still achieve your mission objectives?

We'll also see new weapons, the JDAM, JSOW, SLAM-ER and Aim-9X. The latter will see us using a helmet mounted sight to lock onto a target. This allows you to fire at an air object up to 90 degrees from your flight path! How? Use one of the new feedback and control devices that you mount on your head. Turn your head left, your view pans left. They're hot and about to hit the shelves!

WWII flight sim fans will see 64+ player internet games with multiple people in single aircraft. Sure, **Warbirds** has done this for years, but with poor graphics. In the next 12 months, we'll get the lot.

For the enthusiast, the horizon will be the limit. **Total Air War...** you ain't seen nothing yet! We'll be given the opportunity to fight the battle strategically, by theatre (operationally), and tactically. We'll do this in all three conventional environments; land, sea and air, and what's more we'll be able to play any role. We will link by internet with others to fight by environment. Eg, at the tactical level, one mate commands the armour, you the supporting AH64Ds, while another performs CAP. Others will play enemy forces. Total immersion!

I forecast that multi-environment cooperative multiplayer gameplay, and new feedback and control devices will have swept away current gameplay standards by this time next year.

Sports

John M. Dewhurst

There's good news for the golfer in all of us, with new titles from both Sierra and Microsoft. Sierra has **PGA Championship Golf 1999** Edition. You can strut the greens as a PGA pro or as a casual player, on seven courses in full 3D. There's also a course architect that lets you model the front nine of your local golf club or whatever you wish.

On a lighter note, Microsoft have **Links Extreme** - a comical excursion to a Demolition Driving Range. You must aim your exploding golf balls at various wildlife and course officials at will. The options for play include Deathmatch Golf, Poison Golf and Extreme Golf. Not particularly serious obviously but perhaps worth a look. There are demo versions of both of these golf titles



at the usual spots on the web.

EA Sports **NBA LIVE 2000** looks to be a most exciting basketball title in development. There's word of individual facial expressions for players as well as distinctive moves for particular superstars. So you can use the patented cross-over dribble of Tim Hardaway or Reggie Miller's fadeaway jumpshot. Perhaps most exciting of all is the inclusion of the superstars of basketball history as well as today's greats. The golden oldies include Dr. J, Oscar Robertson and Bill Russell. EA has found the NBA LIVE 2000 figurehead, er... spokesman in Kevin Garnett. The Minnesota Timberwolves' forward will help in development of the title and appear in advertising. The game will be available later this year.

Sierra has something for the angling gamers of the world, with the announcement of **Field & Stream Trophy Bass 3D**. That's right, you have the opportunity to explore 15 full-size lakes and fish for 30 different species of fish. Sierra boast an improved fish AI and fight model - hopefully the fish intelligence is more realistic rather than extremely high or you'll be there all day... There's also the latest tackle and simplified boat controls so that you fish with minimum hassle. The coolest feature though is the Lurecam that lets you follow the lure towards your catch. Sounds interesting...

Lastly, E.A.'s **Need for Speed: High Stakes** is the latest in that series of high speed racers and it looks pretty impressive in that NFS kinda way. There's a demo out at the moment (on this month's cover CD, no less) and it should be available later before summer.

TRICKSTYLE

■ Genre: Racer ■ Players: 1-TBA ■ Publisher: Acclaim/Criterion ■ Due: Late '99

Convention has it that any village in the outskirts of a major English town or city will always be "quaint". Or even, "picturesque". Occasionally there's a "grimey" chunked in, but more often than not, the description is strangely positive.

Which brings us to Criterion Studios. They're based in the idyllic town of Guildford, which is just an hour's drive by car outside of London. It's a pretty town, rich in history and, dare we say, definitely picturesque. Within a quaint and characteristically English building a small development team has taken residence to produce one of the most spectacular looking games of 1999. And there's nothing quaint about it.

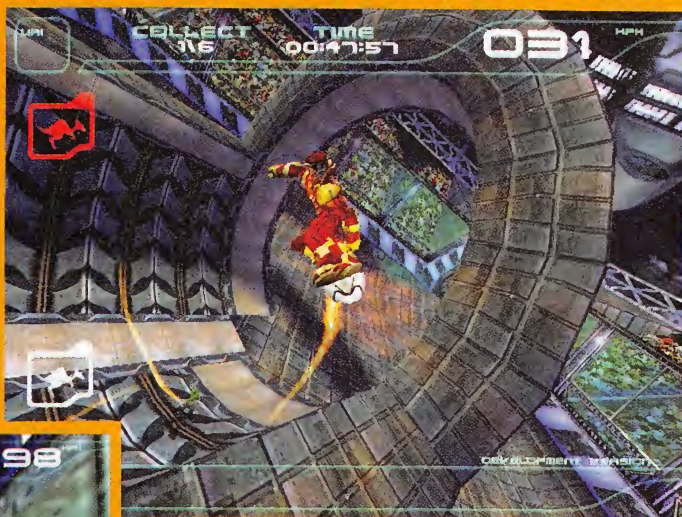
Criterion have assembled a collection of fresh and able speed freaks to work on Trickstyle - the brainchild of Ed Hayden, Lead Artist on the project. The seed of inspiration? A stunt-racing game with a techno-futuristic edge where style is just as important as speed, all within a

fully realised 3D world. Taking place on Back to the Future II-esque hoverboards, the game initially looks simple within its obvious racing roots. Upon further inspection of the game, it



becomes abundantly clear that there's much, much more to Trickstyle.

PowerPlay received the grand tour of Trickstyle by the developers themselves. What we saw left us speechless. Even if this was just a "racer on boards", Trickstyle would have blown us away. Not only are the game environments gorgeously detailed, they're absolutely mammoth in scope. Played within a city of the future, there are multiple paths to be taken en route to the course's finish line. And then there's the freedom on each of the game's many tracks. You can ride up walls, through tunnels, under cars, through subways - basically, over, under, and even through most of the Trickstyle's detailed environment. As a racing game alone, this is a winner. The races are



tense, the sense of speed glorious, and the tracks - stunning.

But coupled with the tricks and stunts on offer, Trickstyle really starts to shine. There are a handful of tricks and stunts

at your disposal; some for show, others for speed, and the remainder for destruction. Played within a dynamic environment, certain moves will open up new paths to the player. Finding or opening these requires some finesse, so mastering Trickstyle's stunts becomes an instant priority if you wish to unlock many of the game's charms and secrets. The in-race gameplay is fast and fluid, and this carries on to the pre and post racing sections.

Criterion have aimed for strong continuity within the game. Rather than selecting you

board, racer, gameplay mode and of course, track from a pretty (but static) menu screen, you choose your style of play by skating to specific areas in a giant hub area that comprises the Trickstyle world. Think Diddy Kong Racing and you're on the right track. Trickstyle's hub area approach though is much more comprehensive. There are all manner of things to do here: race around a make shift track, practice your tricks in the stunt bowl, or learn and master the many tricks that are introduced to you as you progress through the game.

What really stands out about Trickstyle is the sense of freedom it imparts. Feel like hooning about the hub area just to practice your technique? Do it. Want to take a more direct (if not more dangerous) route through a track? Do it. Trickstyle will let you. Expect a full review soon.

FORCE 21

■ Genre: Strategy ■ Players: 1 or 4 ■ Publisher: Red Storm ■ Due: August

Futurewar done with a serious attitude.

There is a future battlespace known as the "less dense battlefield" where sensors mounted on weapons platforms out-number men on the ground. This is high tech warfare using the latest equipment to create a "fog of war" in the mind of the enemy before combat is joined. Then when it is, to use those same assets to out-maneuvre the enemy and deprive him of coherent command and control over his forces. To quote Sun Tzu a Chinese general, circa 500 B.C., "You must win the battle before it is fought". This is Force 21!

The year is 2015. Here we see Russia sliding into economic and social chaos, a free-market China has become the pre-eminent power in the Far East. Desperate for natural resources to sustain its economic boom, Beijing invades the central Asian republic of Kazakhstan, drawing both Russia and the United States into a struggle that ultimately will determine who will rule the world in the 21st Century.

After you select the side you wish to align yourself with, the game takes on a distinctly Red Storm flavour where you are



briefed, gather intelligence, then select men to do specific command tasks. Match the person with the mission! The feel of this element is smooth, it looks good, and is very similar to Rainbow 6.

You then plan the overall



We're still awaiting the RTS that entirely pre-empts all combat, but Force 21 is a step in the right direction



strategy by controlling up to sixteen platoons that consist of tanks, helicopters, artillery, combat engineers, and electronic warfare units. Plenty of options here to choose a killing ground of your choice, or use reconnaissance to plan deception with minefields, or perhaps an air strike to cover your main axis of advance. Leave it all with the AI, or dive in and command at the company level with a growing number of assets under your operational control as each mission is achieved.

The game is played on a 3D landscape, based on actual locations in China, Russia and Kazakhstan. 30 missions in all, 15 on either side if you play in the single player mode. If you select multiplayer mode you can play with up to four players in 10 multiplayer maps in cooperative and deathmatch play. A fair number of options here, but we'll wait to see if it is enough at

30 missions when the game is released.

Force 21 is looking good. I'm a little concerned about the limited missions, and some of the damage modelling, but I think it will be a multiplayer winner.

Maj Ian Lindgren

GP-500

■ Genre: Action Sim ■ Players: 1-8 ■ Publisher: MicroProse ■ Due: Almost ready...

Almost there kids. Coming soon: The Unicycle sim. And the wheel turns...

As gratefully as we worship hardcore racing sims, there's always been something about bike racing sims that puts a bad taste in our collective mouths. This thing, specifically, is that they are simply so mindbendingly difficult. Now, learning curves we know and love, and Grand Prix Legends taught us much about the whole effort/reward pattern, but bike games? We try and try, we really do...

Phew. Just climbed off Mick Doohan's statistically-accurate 500cc F1 Honda, after a healthy whip around the lovely Phillip

Island circuit. No pain either - we want to race this thing again! This thing, being the purely-named 'GP500' from acknowledged sim-masters MicroProse.

It's a bike, fool!

"Action sim" - as MicroProse choose to categorise GP500, is right on the money. For the first hour or so you'll

wonder why they threw the 'action' word in there - for it will all seem sim, but then, slowly at first, the bits fall into place and you'll be doing hot laps relatively free of catastrophe. The trick, and yes, we do feel like idiots saying this, is to steer the bike around like a bike, not a car. Yes, thank you PC PowerPlay for that pearl of

Remember, folks, you're racing a BIKE, not a car...

wisdom... No! Wait! Come back! It's true! And the funny bit for true sim racers: give up completely any hope of first-person steerage and race from the external 'arcade style' viewpoint. It's the only way to reliable performance and snappy lap times.

The developers all do, we know, we went and visited them. Scary looking bunch of leather-clad reprobates they were, most rode powerful bikes themselves and all took their racing deadly serious. It was the external 'Moto Racer' view for them and they loved it. Being arrogant elitists, we shunned this obvious silliness and took straight to the handlebars view, then to the asphalt, the grass, the dirt and eventually (total time elapsed 1.4 seconds) the tyrewall. Right then, arcade-view it is...



The 500 metre wheelie race



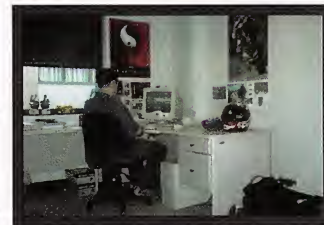
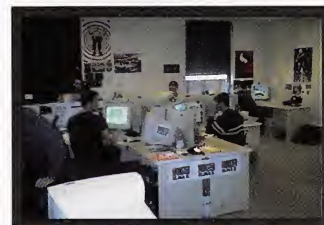
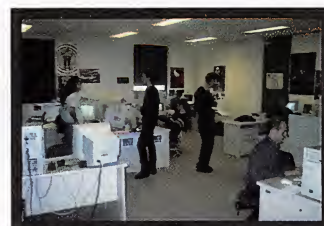
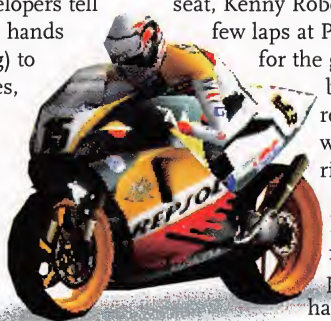
MicroProse picked up the official license for GP500 from Dorna Promocion, administrator of the FIM Road Racing World Championship. That means two things: they have an obligation to do a ripsnorter of a job with the game, and secondly, all the bits are authentic. From billboards (no, the developers tell us, cash never changes hands for in-game advertising) to accurately detailed bikes, each individually modelled. Real names too, so that won't be just any old 3D person you biff off on the corner, but a real, virtual Mick Doohan, Kenny Roberts, Max Biaggi



etc. Important stuff this. Pretend names burst our reality bubble like nothing else can.

Sound cheque

Elsewhere in the reality department, MicroProse sampled many of the current 500cc F1 bikes' engine sounds for use in the game. Of noteworthy interest: with a microphone under his seat, Kenny Roberts did a few laps at Phillip Island for the game - and broke the lap record! So when you ride Kenny's Suzuki, do him the respect of pushing it as hard as he



would have been while recording engine music just for you.

Having established that GP500 is indeed a game to look forward to, here's the cool bit: it's Australian-made. No, MicroProse haven't set up a development studio here (but wouldn't that be great!), instead they contracted local wonders Beam Software for

the job. Two years in the making and featuring Beam's most talented artists and programmers, GP500 is as tasty as we'd ever hope a bike game could be. At E3 the game pulled a healthy crowd, and all we want now is the final code. So come on then Beam, hurry up!

Ben Mansill



ANNO 1602

■ Genre: Strategy ■ Players: 1-Multi ■ Publisher: GT Interactive ■ Due: 3rd Qtr '99



EBARMWLBRAS. It just rolls off the tongue, doesn't it?

If there's one style of gaming the Germans do very well, then it's surely the "Empire Building And Resource Management With Little Blokes Running Around Strategy" game. Think Knights And Merchants. Think the entire Settlers series. Think Anno 1602. A huge success in the land of beer halls and Krautrock (where it has reportedly sold nearly 500,000 copies) and now translated into English, Anno 1602 is Sunflowers' attempt to claim right to the definitive, um... EBARMWLBRAS title. Upon inspection of the playable preview copy that wended its way from Deutschland to PCPP HQ, we can definitely say they're heading in the right direction.

The game commences, as always, with some virgin land mass and a collection of eager colonists - this time already aboard a galleon as each new game swings into progress. Priority number one is to determine a desirable location to found your initial colony and plonk down a warehouse (that also functions as a port) somewhere along the coast. From then on the usual exploitation of natural resources proceeds in a lively fashion. Foresters move in to hack down the trees, fishermen line the shores to dangle their rods, hunters head out into the woods to poke sharp sticks into the local fauna, and miners carve chunks out of the mountain side in search of ore. You



They've served us well throughout many gaming years, and now they're back to do it all again. Little blokes - you've gotta love 'em.

should all know the drill by now and, happily, Anno 1602 would appear to divert little from this well-worn path.

In line with the current trend, the game plays in real-time. Though turn-based strategy fans need not fear, since the pace is decidedly leisurely. Unless you switch to the highest speed setting, the game will allow you to peruse your town, checking on buildings, production rates, workers and the mood of your population, as you please.

While Sunflowers are promising a balanced combination of combat and city construction, we would like to mention that there seem a remarkably large emphasis on trading between each of the nations. Specifically, sea-bound trade routes are essential. On a related note, and in marked contrast to other similar games,

each map consists predominately of waterways with only a handful (sometimes more) of small islands constituting the colonisable playing area. Thus, in this aspect at least, Anno 1602 offers a distinct departure from the typical EBARMWLBRAS (yes, we already know we need a better shorthand description than that, but - hey - we're working on it) game.

After a busy schedule for strategy games of late, it is going to difficult in the coming months for any newcomer to stand out from the crowd. While Anno 1602 cannot really claim to possess much in the way of revolutionary or outstanding features, it could still shape up as a perfectly enjoyable EBARMJK-TY... WLBRFZPE... PUKGVS-DT... Damn! Whatever, you know what we mean.



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7th Legion	53	#19	Atmosphere	55	#2	Buggy	74	#33
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AFL 99	90	#34	Battle at Ardenne	86	#17	Castrol Honda Superbikes	89	#26
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ARL Rugby League 96	88	#4	Blood 2	72	#34	Constructor	84	#15
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Army Men	85	#29	Blue Ice	77	#10	Cricket 97	87	#17
						Croc	74	#22
						Crusader: No Regret	95	#7
						Curse of Monkey Island	92	#21
						Cyber Judas	43	#5
						Cyberball	6	#29
						Cyberstorm	91	#3
						Cyberstorm 2	68	#28
						Cyberstrike 2	83	#34
						Daggerfall	83	#8
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						Dark Earth	91	#19
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Gold Award - Games scoring 90-94%

Platinum Award - Games scoring 95-100%

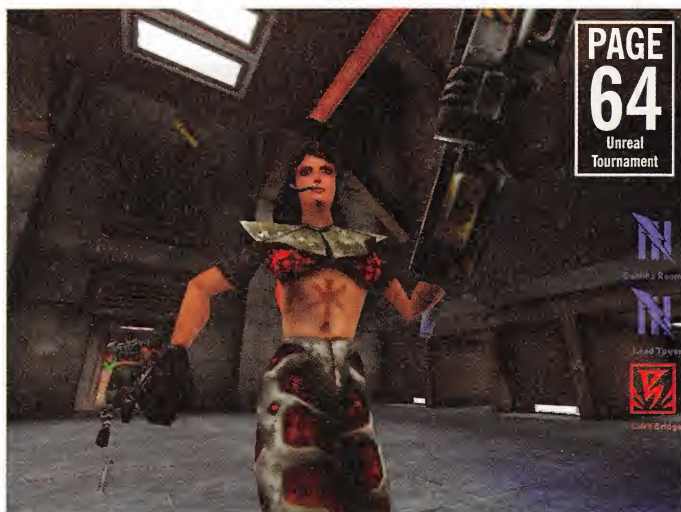
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Final Doom	82	#6	Incoming	67	#24
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Forbidden City	74	#32	Interstate '76 Arsenal	78	#25
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Grand Theft Auto	65	#18	Knights and Merchants	81	#32
Grand Touring	60	#35	Krazy Ivan	57	#9
Great Battles of Alexander	80	#17	Krush Kill 'n Destroy	90	#7
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Half Life	98	#31	Legacy of Kain	65	#18
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Harpoon 97	90	#10	Links 99	86	#32
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ONE YEAR AGO... X-Files



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REVIEWS



Satisfaction guaranteed

It must be some Golden Age, or something. It's rare indeed to have such a concentrated hit of stunning games in one issue of PC PowerPlay.

What to play? The entire team have been transfixed by the beauty of Unreal Tournament. We will get the cliches out of the way first: this is the game the original Unreal should have been and it's the game Quake 3 will want to be. Oh, and you may have noticed the "World Exclusive" on the cover, yep, we're the one! I visited Epic's offices in North Carolina straight after E3 and begged in the most honourable fashion for this exclusive, which CEO Mark Rein amazingly agreed to. Top bloke. Mark also stayed up till dawn (his time) doing high res screen-shots for our cover, with us phoning him every time we sensed he was getting sleepy.

Episode 1 hit, Next Gaming hit Hoyts on Broadway en masse on Day 1, and the two official games out first prove that nothing changes with games created from a movie license. That is, the stock-standard plot and character based game (Phantom

Menace) is lifeless and dull, while the technology/device/action sequence game (Pod Racer) doth rock mightily. Go little Darth! Go!

We all downed tools when Ed finished his Mechwarrior 3 review. Read it and you too will need to play this stunner of a game. Rompy stumpy fun.

ORPG fans now finally have a practical alternative to Ultima Online, in Everquest. It's first-person, it's hardware accelerated, it's a Sony!

If you can turn a blind eye to the Trekness of it all, Birth of the Federation is, in fact, Master of Orion 3, something wonderful has happened...

And in other unofficial sequel news, Fleet Command is actually Harpoon 3, which to .002% of the gaming community is great news.

As I finish writing this word came in of a couple more 100% definite reviewable games for next issue. Oh my, and we thought this lot was a bumper crop...

Benedict W. Mansill
Editor in the House

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THE PC POWERPLAY SCORING SYSTEM

95%+	PLATINUM The Best. Virtually faultless, reserved for games which cause loss of sleep from thinking of nothing else.
90-94%	GOLD A classic. Either an unquestionable example of superiority within its genre, or a ground breaking game that'll be setting trends.
80-90%	A strong, eminently playable game. Hard to fault and likely to still be on the hard drive in 6 month's time.
60-80%	Competent and generally enjoyable. Flaws or mediocrity hold these games back from higher ratings.
40-60%	Average and ordinary. Not bad, not good. Ideal gift.
0-40%	Bad, really bad. Boring, shamelessly unoriginal, cheap and horrible.

Unreal Tournament



Genre: Multiplayer Oriented FPS | Players: 1-64 (LAN, internet, modem) | Publisher: Epic/GT Interactive | Price: \$TBA | Rating: MA15+ | Available: Now

Unreal Tournament vs Q3A? Bah! UT's here, now, and it's unreal!

In the bleak landscape of an overpopulated future, cable television audiences have finally gotten sick of re-runs of Leave it to Beaver, and produced a modern interpretation. This takes the form of watching live footage of two groups of convicted criminals, fighting to the death in outlandish competitions of meaningless carnage, to entertain and destroy. The Tournament is a future game show/killing spree, with reams of gut-spilling and summary executions carried out in every episode for the ravenous, lounge-ridden addicts of the sport. Seems the days when we could appreciate the hilarious antics of a buck-toothed youngster and his wacky neighbourhood adventures are long over.

Now what pulls the ratings is the visceral thrill of watching people fighting to the death, for the viewing pleasure of the millions of paying consumers.

Absolutely Lush

Unreal has been the prettiest first-person shooter for a long time. It brought a handful of new elements to single player gaming, looked absolutely lush, and was a very, very long game. It definitely still holds the record for the nicest-looking sky, and had insanely good-looking models for the time. Developers Epic have decided they want a slice of the multiplayer pie, going against their history of single player experiences. Unreal Tournament is their ambitious attempt to squeeze a capable multiplayer experience out of their ageing single-player engine.

Patches de la creme

The extremely delayed networking enhancements that were such a bugbear when Unreal originally shipped are built into UT from the outset. All of those annoying little fixes and improvements are included in the game engine out of the box. Thankfully they are a huge improvement.

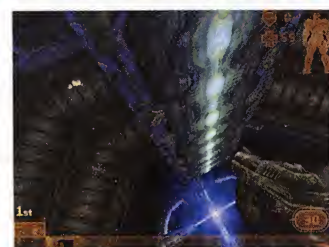
Deathmatch HAL 9000's Ass

Playing in the single player mode, you have a mortal-kombat style ladder, where you progress through teamplay scenarios with allied and enemy "bots" (artificially intelligent players). You gradually



unlock all the scenario types, and then all of the levels, playing through escalating size and complexity. Eventually you are fighting huge eight-on-eight battles in gigantic environments. There is

an absolutely outstanding tutorial for every single game type, as comprehensive as the half-life HEV training, with full voice overs and step-by-step demonstration of each aspect of the



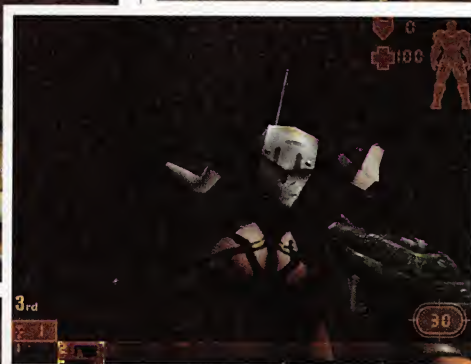
(above) Yeehaa! John Woo style!
Double pistols sidearm style!
Yeeaaahhh!
Ahem... yes, I've settled down now.

game type, even for the simplest of all, Deathmatch! This is truly a newbie's heaven. There are a few good solid months of play in this for a novice player, as their skills improve and they unlock all the maps and scenarios. Veteran players will find this more of a formality than a challenge, but it's still kind of fun just to have a go and play along through the lessons. A huge amount of work has gone into them, and you could hardly ask for better tuition.

Funky Bottage

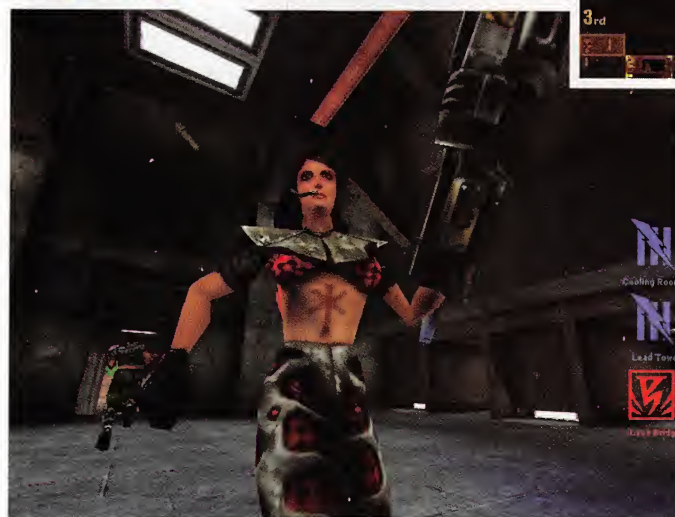
The bots provide you with all of your allies and enemies in the single player mode, and I can





safely say this game has the most comprehensive bot control system ever seen. The bots have 5 levels of intelligence, and have no trouble negotiating any of the levels or scenarios, which is outstanding. They can be carefully matched against your own skill, or can "auto-skill" to adapt to your level mid-game. Bots on your team can be commanded in basic behaviours by a simple on-screen menu. They'll follow commands to escort you, attack, try for the game objective, defend a position, or search and destroy at random. They seem fairly disobedient though; after several minutes they often conveniently "forget" your instructions. This is either a bug, or some devilishly clever "free will" mimicry. It's not like they're disagreeing with your orders; they always respond with an optimistic "Affirmative, Red Leader!". Then suddenly run off when you need them the most.

Despite this the bots are probably the strongest part of Unreal Tournament. Combined with the fresh game scenarios, they present a solid single-player experience. Their effortless behaviour within the game world really sucks you into the atmosphere of battle and grim cooperation. It's a lot like an intense online multiplayer session, where the only giveaways to a player's artificiality are their rather mechanical strategies and lack of planning. Of course they still blunder into traps and seem incapable of responding adequately to organised defen-



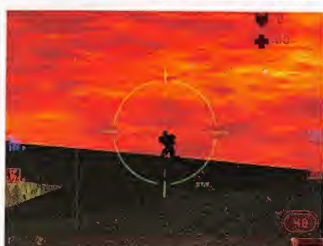
sive emplacements. But minor gripes aside, they really are a magic piece of programming, and pretty formidable opponents.

Corking Levels

Unreal Tournament comes with a huge selection of maps. There are at least ten custom maps for each scenario, and about twenty straight death-match arenas.

In there, about seven of them are absolute corkers. I've already mentioned the train level in Assault; others include an aggressive boarding of a ship in dock (very piratey), an assault in a complex on the floor of an ocean: you have to swim under the structures so you can enter via the air portals in the floors. There's an amazing capture-the flag level where two towers face each other on a spinning asteroid, perched between thin tendrils of rock. In the sur-

rounding space, other asteroids tumble with majestic slowness, and a gigantic, detailed texture of the Earth fills half the sky. The levels are of an overall high quality, especially the Assault levels, some of which are simply brilliant.



(left and above) The skins are very nicely detailed and come in a range of combat fatigues and bondage gear.

Ye Olde Weaponry

The Unreal Tournament weapons are a pretty and subtle reworking of the "classic" Unreal ones. There's new models, slightly different alternative fire modes, a plasma gun and a BFG style "king" weapon, which is all fairly standard stuff. The BFG alternative fire mode launches a huge rocket which you steer via "slam cam" footage from the nose of the bomb itself.

Newly spawned players are all equipped with an automag pistol and a big yellow piston thing that can explode people, if only you can get close enough to kiss them with it. The weapons all certainly look nice, and do kill



Fresh Scenarios

What makes Unreal Tournament a really worthwhile experience is its many teamplay scenarios, which draw inspiration from the conjecture and speculation surrounding upcoming titles that other developers are only talking about. Unreal Tournament has a boat load of these features incorporated right now, which is an amazing feat by Epic as they have beaten those other games to market by several months. However, the tangible improvements that these scenarios add to gameplay are definitely mixed.

Assault

This is the most blatant "rip" from the Teamfortress specs, these maps give one team a nicely defensible structure to inhabit, and the other team must penetrate the defences and complete some aggressive objectives once they are inside the defended area. These include taking out destructible equipment and throwing switches deep in the enemy territory. In some there is a sequence of switch-throwing and object destruction to gradually open a path-way to the final objective. The defending team win by successfully defending the territory until the defined time limit has elapsed. There are two amazing levels in this scenario, one of which involves fighting to the control room of a rapidly speeding train, another is an opposed water landing scenario, such as the one seen in the opening scenes of Saving Private Ryan. In this stellar level you must fight off the beach, into a heavy complex and destroy the control system for a massive naval gun. Both of those levels are pure brilliance. Once the scenario has been played through, the team objectives reverse.

Domination

This is a fairly basic scenario, based around the idea of controlling territory "points" in a map. The points appear as flags in the environment that change into the team colour of players that pass through them. Each "possession" point generates 1 teamscore every second. The game ends when one team reaches a certain predefined teamscore limit. Domination requires a combination of quick-reflex combat skills and aggressive area defence methods.

Capture the Flag

This classic import from the Quake universe is very familiar in form to multiplayer veterans, although it is a fairly flat translation. It leaves something wanting in the absence of the grappling hook. There are timed powerups that give you rocket jump height for a short time, but they are a poor replacement for the hook as you can only reach levels of a certain fixed height, and they don't help you in travelling diagonally or horizontally. This forces you to use more straight-forward tactics, which simplifies the whole experience.

There is also a "Quad Damage" style powerup that multiplies the damage you can do for a limited amount of time. One of the much touted powerups is a personal teleport device where you can specify your destination with a tiny locator disc. You can teleport to that location at will, but if someone damages the disc, you will be telefragged as you travel through. These are interesting gimmicks but their usefulness in practical terms is fairly limited.

Last Man Standing

In this mode each player begins with a limited stockpile of sixteen lives. When these lives run out the player is knocked out of the competition. Obviously, the last player to get knocked out is the winner. This is a free-for-all, rather than team-based scenario.

Tournament Darkmatch

This mode is the same as the original Unreal Darkmatch, where the levels are played with no ambient light, and the players have flashlights pointing along their weapon sights. This is also a free-for-all scenario.



The built in "mods" are a great bonus, and really make the game come alive. The Saving Private Ryan Assault level is just one highlight



things you point them at, but there's something generally annoying about them all.

I think the reason the weapons seem so ineffectual and unsatisfying is because none of them have been based in any kind of science or realism. They don't have any particular "usefulness" profile (besides the rather good sniper rifle).

ModelSkins

There are quite a few new "soldierly" looking models to choose from, with big sections that change colour depending on team colour. A fairly big touted feature is the ability to change the "head" skin on your player, so theoretically you can make your own texture with your mugshot on it, and your hair colour. This has a pretty minor effect on things, especially as you don't often get that close to players before instantly exploding, but it's nice to have the option, I suppose. The CD comes packed with virtually hundreds of different skins and "heads" to choose from.

World Published Stats

Unreal Tournament keeps comprehensive statistics on your performance as you play in single and multiplayer games. After each level is over a HTML page that you can view with your web browser shows up with you average hit ration for each weapon, and effectiveness over time measurements, and amazing stuff that is very hard to gauge without accumulated information.



One of the best improvements over plain old Unreal is the weapons. A considerable effort has been made to get the sound just right

as well be a perfect expert at the game - your score against advanced bots will certainly indicate as much.

It's all a big, explosive, cheap thrill that hinges far less on thinking, strategy and teamwork, than running in random circles with the biggest gun. What really needed to be done was a massive re-assessment of the Unreal weapons and their relative weightings, to make it a balanced multiplayer world.

This won't offend newbies to the genre, though.

Good stuff

If you've heard about TeamFortress, but found it too complicated, or would have trouble downloading it and stuffing around looking for online opponents, this game is for you. It's like the gamer's University for multiplayer first person shooter games.

Ed Dawson

Especially as you play many games, trends show up in your gameplay, and you can easily "see" weaknesses in your skills, or approaches you could adopt to become a more effective player.

When playing online your stats can be lodged with the worldwide player database, and you can try and show up in the world rankings. This is the most comprehensive attempt of this kind ever made.

Veterans Beware

Veterans of teamplay FPS games beware: Unreal Tournament is not a game that encourages "expert skills", that take a long time to master. In this game good decisions can often have bad results, which discourages creativity. You end up running blindly into explosive,

instant death battle after explosive, instant death battle, letting luck and circumstance rule your score. You realise very quickly the most effective strategy is to grab the heaviest weapon you can find, and use it in a way that deals the most possible damage in a single hit. Then always play to make that cataclysmic hit, first. Your enemy explodes into a million pieces. They can be as strategic as they want, but you will prevail, having been randomly running in odd circles through the rooms, firing single massive blasts at anything that moves. And why not. In Unreal Tournament, it's an almost flawless theory. You may



PLUS+



www.unrealtournament.com

GOLD

94%

■ For

The excellent scenarios, the neatly packaged menu system, the best single-player versus artificial intelligence experience ever created, the exemplary tutorials. An awesomely fantastic game for daunted newbies, and single-player enthusiasts.

■ Against

The limited replay in a human vs human setting, the evidently simplistic combat model for veteran gamers, and the inferior networking, which quite simply, still isn't as good as Quake's.

■ Need

P200, 32 MB RAM, 4x CD-ROM, SVGA, 80 MB disk space

■ Want

PII 450, 128 MB RAM, Voodoo2 or better accelerator, cutting-edge 2D graphics card.

3D SUPPORT

D3D and Glide

Star Wars Episode 1 Racer

Genre: Racing | Players: 1-8 (IPX, TCP/IP, direct) | Developer: LucasArts | Publisher: LucasArts | Price: \$79.95 | Rating: G | Available: Now

Yes yes, Racer is indeed an Episode 1 game - more to the point though, it's a TOP GAME!



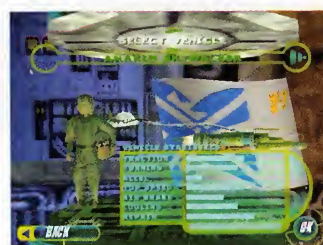
The Star Wars galaxy had it all - tyrannical governments, rebellions, heroes, sword-play, beautiful princesses, bounty hunters... wait a minute, there's something missing. What's any galaxy without entertainment? Not everyone has the opportunity to feed Jedis to Banthas as a matinee, so what does everyone who isn't Jabba the Hutt do for a good time? It took George Lucas twenty years to realise it but no galaxy's complete without sport. And in this case, Pod Racing. Welcome to the Outer Rim Territories, where too much Pod Racing is barely enough! For those of you unaware, Pod Racing is seen in the all new Star Wars movie, The Phantom Menace. It's basically a high-tech chariot race where competitors use their skills, cunning and treachery to win. In the movie, young Anakin Skywalker races for his freedom. Well this time, we're racing for the thrills!

Go Little Darth! Go!

Anakin's pod (above right) is a good all-rounder, while Sebulba's (left) can reach speeds of 900kmph. And boy, do you feel it!

Pod on me

It seems that in the game, young Anakin doesn't need to rush off and find his destiny with the Jedi Council but rather has all the time in the world to



take his hotted up Pod Racer around the racing circuit. If he had any idea where he was heading in the movie, Anakin would probably stay where he was... You can choose to race as Anakin, Sebulba the reigning champion, Teemto or many others as you race through a number of championships. Each contender has a different craft with its own particular setup and advantages. Oddly, each Pod Racer is very distinct visually. Some have giant engines and tiny pods, some have round engines, others boxy. This adds to the excitement as you can easily see who it is that's in front of you.

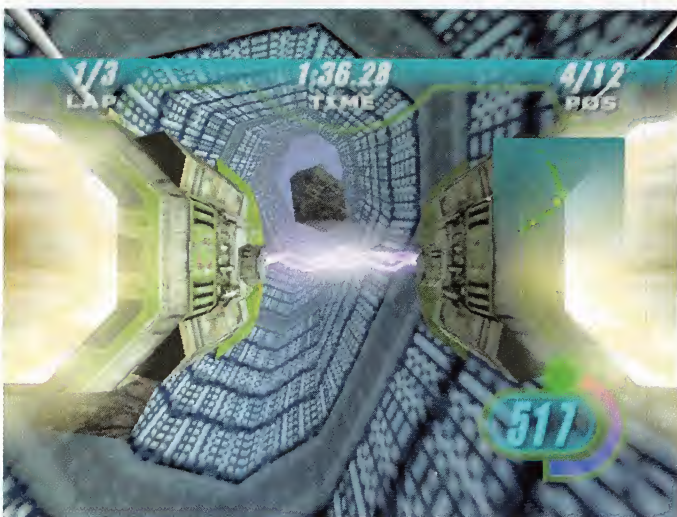
Stay frosty Racer!

The races take place on 8 different worlds and the scenery varies greatly through more than twenty courses, as you'd expect. The locations you race in include Tatooine's desert, the high-tech cityscape of Mon Gazza, the ice world of Ando Prime, Malastare's strange rock and gas covered surface, the underwater playground of Aquilarus and Oovo IV, a prison planet. The tracks are well designed and offer a nice balance of thrills & good racing. In the later tracks, the course may split into a number of alternate routes. This gives the racer the chance to split from the pack and maybe gain some





(above) Win, get cash, buy faster rockets
(left) The Tatooine track comes complete with sniping Tusken raiders



crucial extra seconds. Another great touch is that some tracks change periodically through the race. It may have been a hard test for two laps at one particular point but for that final lap, the course changes to an easy right. This is great for keeping you on

your toes especially through the long races. So it looks like a healthy racing sim with all the trimmings but does Racer stand out from the crowd? Damn straight it is.

All the cute extras in the world would count for nothing if Racer

wasn't an extraordinary experience. Rejoice gamers, Racer ROCKS! Mostly this is because the illusion of speed is so fantastic. It's that indescribable something of racing games - if you don't feel like you're really moving, then the game's fairly pointless. Racer feels great. You zoom along at an average of about 400 somethings (miles per hour presumably). You have a booster on your craft that can send you upwards of 600 aforementioned units of speed!

The control features offer some nice options in play. The boost mentioned earlier is a great addition. It needs to warm up, so you have to be going a considerable speed before you can use it. However, after it's available, you can use it ANY TIME but only for a limited time (or else your engines overheat and you hit the sideline). Like all great gaming, Racer requires tactics and discretion: it's no good using your boost at every straight, if you're only going to plough into the wall at the next turn! Your twin engines have a certain, generous amount of damage they can





Tracks are many and varied, but best of all, HUGE! Many of the tracks on the pro circuit will take over 3 minutes to complete one lap. Of course, there ARE numerous shortcuts that can be employed...

withstand before one gives out and you're left spinning futilely! You return to the race almost instantly but this ultimately must be avoided. Repairing in mid-race obviously helps to keep your racer out of the gutter. You can spin your craft sideways to make some tight squeezes more manageable. There's also the chance to repair your craft mid-race as well as taunt your fellow racers!

Asteroids 2000

Another critical reason that Racer is so good is due to the focus the developers gave the game. It's not some deadly accurate racing game where if you nudge a corner you lose most of your speed. Racer is about fun and speed. There's plenty of jumps from implausible heights as well as different terrain like ice, that alter traction (which is a bit silly really, since your pod racer is hov-

Racer Upgrades

As you progress through Racer, you're going to need to upgrade your vehicle to keep ahead of your opponents. Watto is the man, um... flying rat-thing that you need to talk to about new parts. Watto is a disagreeable little character and has a sort of Italian accent ("What? This parta no gooda for you?") In the movie, he "employs" Anakin to work for him. With the truguts (i.e. currency) that you win racing, you can go to Watto's shop front and purchase new air brakes, a thrust coil or control vectro-jet. If you haven't been winning so many but still need to upgrade, Watto's junkyard may offer you what you need at the right price. It's funny how Watto and all his operations can follow the race circuit around the galaxy though. Hmmm...



ering above the ground). There is also the memorable zero gravity section of one track where you spin freely, desperately trying to avoid asteroid debris in your way. It is great that the game is fairly easy to pick up but has enough variety in play to keep you interested in the long term.

There is no difficulty setting available for the championships but the races begin easy and gradually become more challenging. I think the learning curve of the game is nearly perfect - certainly not too easy or too hard as to put the average gamer off.

Doubtless, many will see the similarities between Racer and Wipeout and this can only be a good thing. Although this is arguably arcade style racing, Lucasarts have not included some of the standard features of the genre. We don't have zips or weapons that "even up" a race. What you do have is easily understood racing principles. This is (more or less) straight ahead racing and it works really well. It's all in the name of fun gaming which is just what we like here at PowerPlay.





(above) Purchasing Pit Droids is essential for repairing badly damaged engines (top)



Multi-Racer

Everything about Racer is tailor-made for multiplayer racing. The fact that the racing is so smooth and impressive as well as the easily distinguishable craft and simple racing principles make this a multiplayer must have. It's still not particularly clear how many racers will be able to play online but up to 8 can definitely take part over a LAN. The best racing will most certainly be had against other humans rather than in the single player game, so this is just one more reason why Racer is a game worthy of your attention.

To make sure the Star Wars fans are catered for, Racer has the usual array of features. You have the customary rolling titles that explain the saga (the titles for Racer must rank as probably the least exciting yet, but still...) authentic excerpts of Episode 1

film score, the usual array of Frank Oz muppets-cum-aliens that populate the Star Wars universe as well as Watto singing the cantina theme from the original Star Wars (you'll know it when you hear it). Perhaps most impressive is the fact that young

Jake Lloyd, our own lil' Anakin, lends his voice to the game. So the cries of "yaaaahhh!" and "Allright!" are authentic. Just the thing to keep all of those Star Wars obsessives happy!

Chariots of Wire

Tie-in games like Racer risk failing because they look too much to their big name movie for appeal, rather than solid gameplay. Star Wars Episode 1 Racer is a welcome exception to this trend with some truly awesome racing action. Whether it's multiplayer or the single player missions, Racer is superb gaming and since the Star Wars theme is a winner, everyone's happy! Star Wars fans, racing fans - just about everybody covered there - are going to love Racer. Gamers of the world unite! Your chariots have arrived.

John Dewhurst



PLUS+



www.lucasarts.com/products/starwarsracer/default.htm

GOLD

90%

For

Superb, simple arcade racing. Racer has the class to appeal to all gamers and it's Star Wars!

Against

Characters are a bit thin, between race menus fairly dull, but there's precious little to complain about really!

Need

P166, 32MB RAM, 4MB PCI or AGP D3D graphics accelerator card

Want

P233, joystick or force feedback device.

3D SUPPORT

No software support! D3D only

Star Wars Episode 1

The Phantom Menace

Genre: Arcade Racer | Players: 1 | Developer: LucasArts | Publisher: LucasArts | Price: \$TBA | Available: Now

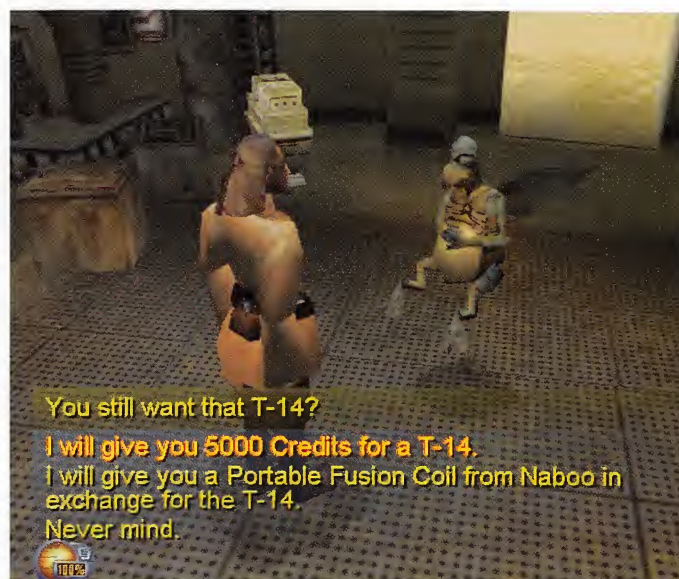
"Use the force Obi-Wan!" "Hey! I'm pushing as hard as I can!"

Star Wars is the commercial science fiction phenomenon of our times. Now two generations of fans are rushing madly to the cinemas to discover the histories and intrigues of Obi Wan Kenobi, Anakin Skywalker and the infamous Clone Wars. This whole Star Wars enthusiasm, I ask myself, what kept it going? Long, long before there were any articles in the daily papers or trailers at the cinema, there was great interest in Star Wars. Star Wars is one of those cultural things that everybody knows about. George Lucas has got the best form of advertising working for him - word-of-mouth. As gamers, we have been with the Star Wars thing all along and can rattle off any number of such titles: Dark Forces, X-Wing, TIE Fighter, Jedi Knight, Shadows of the Empire, X-Wing Alliance. As loyal followers of some good (and questionable) gaming over the years, the release of a new Star Wars film should herald a great game release. I've got some good news and some less good news...



You can be Ewan

It could be easy to confuse The Phantom Menace, the feature, with The Phantom Menace, the game. That is because the game follows the storyline of the flick to the letter. Sounds brave, huh? It seems like overkill to me, especially since many people are going to see the film about a zillion times before they get back to working, sleeping, even (Lord-help-us) gaming. In the game, you take control of Obi Wan for the most part, but do have the opportunity to take control of



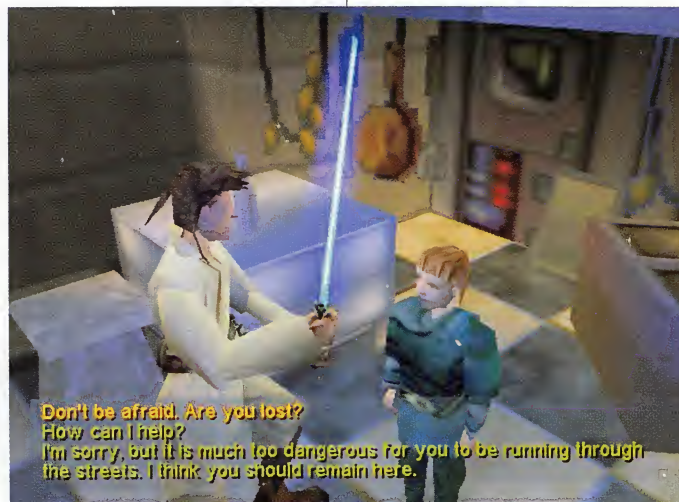
Battledroids are Episode 1's answer to Storm Troopers, sharing the same ability to be totally ineffective and miss every shot they fire.

Qui (sounds like "why") Gon Jinn, your Jedi master, the queen Amidala and Captain Panaka. I can feel the optimists out there saying, this is where Lucasarts

delivers the kind of gaming that have made them famous, right? Let's take a look, shall we...

Adventure game?

The Phantom Menace is an adventure title, but what does that mean? As you discover in the early missions, Lucasarts' version of adventure is a dash-about-fighting-and-slapping-switches affair. (For the purposes of integrity, I'll try to not divulge any sensitive narrative details!) As Obi Wan, you have at your disposal a lightsabre and various firearms and projectiles that you pick up along the way. The game plays from an over-the-shoulder, 3rd person perspective. So you basically run around looking for baddies to batter or a way out of the level.





I must deal with Jabba before the race! Much is at stake here. I have little respect for the Hutts. Let's get this over with.

Oh, you're not Ewan

As you'd expect, The Phantom Menace looks fantastic. The locations are varied and the design and detail are really impressive. Whether you're in a swamp (think Dagobah), in a starship or in a grand palace, the game looks a treat. Smoke billows from air vents, mist clouds your vision. The light sourcing is very fancy as well: in the dark, your light sabre glows over the walls, your enemies - even you! The sound too is extremely special. The character voices are faithful to the actors' - it might not be Ewan McGregor, but I'm damned if I can tell the difference! You also have the atmospheric themes that occur in different situations. If you're getting a bit of biff, your soundtrack turns adventurous - if you're wandering alone, it's tranquil. On the surface, The Phantom Menace is the very essence of class. If you've seen screenshots but not played it, you'd think, "Damn! I NEED that!" So it's with a heavy heart that I inform all you little Skywalkers out there that the gameplay itself is only average.

The Jedi... Push?

The idea for the game is a good one. Run around as a Jedi? I bet there are children in playgrounds the world over, arguing over who gets to be Luke or maybe Han Solo (I always ended up as Chewy...sniff...). The problem is that there's so little to do. The controls are the bare minimum: you can walk, jump, wield

your sabre or firearm and use items. And THAT'S IT. You have ONE Jedi power, which is the Jedi push, that has a minimum of applications. It ends up being a lot like Tomb Raider for one reason or another, but much less challenging - apart from the fact that there is no difficulty setting. Combat is basically a button mashing affair until you've punished your enemies or vice versa.

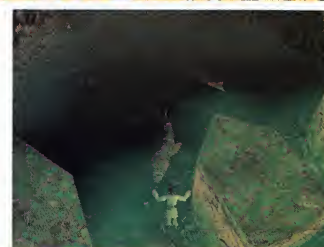
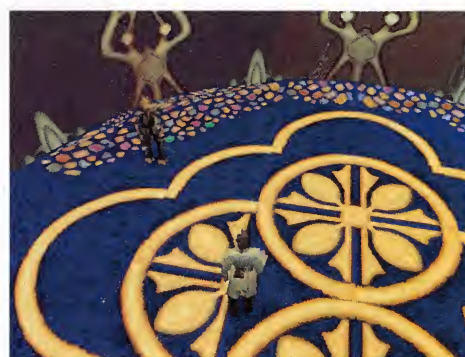
Lucasarts have such a wealth of past Star Wars glories from which to appropriate ideas, but haven't. I think back to Jedi Knight and how you could accumulate various powers and have some convincing Jedi battles. In The Phantom Menace, you can't even

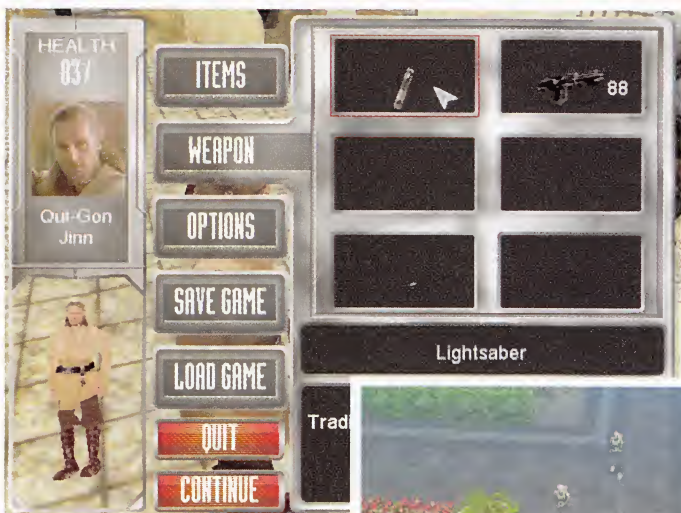
strafe! It's straight-down-the-line action, so leave those Quake skills at the door.

Where's Max?

Fair enough, it IS meant to be an adventure title, perhaps there's some devilish puzzles to unravel. Sadly, there really isn't. If you're ever lacking anything, no

(above) "Hi, I'm looking for a cantina bar with weird and dangerous aliens, live entertainment, and fantastic drinks." "Jesus! My Lord! Is that you?"





doubt there'll be either Qui Gon, the queen or Jar Jar Binks saying, "Go and get this such-and-such" or "You need to find Mr. Wossname." There's none of the brains of Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis or the belly-tickling humour of Sam 'n Max Hit the Road. And there's certainly no mental challenge - even for the slowest wookie!

Jumpy-jumpy japes

The Phantom Menace is VERY linear and there isn't the opportunity to have your choices affect the storyline. No matter what you say or what you do, you're going to either die or end up in the next scene from the movie. It's for this reason that the game feels quite claustrophobic much of the time. Often, the game gains some extended play time by having one of those jumpy-jumpy sequences. You need to jump across various ledges and if you happen to fall - whoops! - back to the start for you! It's kind of annoying with the feeble controls and a bad substitute for good gameplay.

John needs a shave

All of these bad things said, it is quite an addictive game.



(above) Although known for his wisdom and sense of justice, Qui-Gon was also often a bit too trusting. Here we see him falling for the old "help me those damned Jawas have staked me out here in the sun and left me to die" trick.

challenging. Being as pretty as the game is, you are convinced that it isn't all THAT bad (like being certain that Friends is great television). I have a feeling The Phantom Menace will really strike a chord with much younger gamers, but for us grizzled old aficionados of

Star Wars gaming it doesn't make the cut.

Pretty but shallow

The Phantom Menace is going to be either a spoiler if played before seeing the movie, or kind of pointless afterwards.

There's nothing particularly gripping in the gameplay and it really tends to the very simplistic. However, this game is about as beautiful as games get. It's a pity Lucasarts seem to be making games with mass sales at heart, rather than depth and lasting enjoyment. Let's just hope the



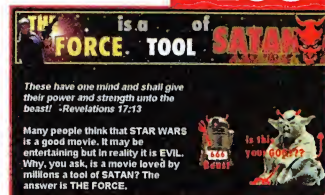
At the time of writing I have not seen The Phantom Menace at the cinema, so it's interesting seeing where the story moves - you'll see Jabba the Hutt, those kooky Jawas and all the rest that you know and adore. It's straight ahead, simple fun that isn't particularly



Episode 1 games to follow will be more in the tradition of some of the great Lucasarts' titles. The Phantom Menace is not awful but frankly it's fairly unessential gaming.

John Dewhurst

PLUS+



www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Lot/9202
The Force is a tool of Satan. Serious? Perhaps not but it's a riot...Check the serious hate mail from Star Wars fans!

76%

For

Fairly competent simple action gaming that looks and sounds INCREDIBLE.

Against

Gameplay is less than enthralling, puzzles are so basic it's embarrassing, lack of variety in play, kiddies' stuff really.

Need

P200, 32MB RAM, 4MB PCI video card, 16 bit sound card

Want

PII 300, 64MB RAM

3D SUPPORT

D3D

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Mechwarrior 3

Genre: Giant robots with guns sim | Players: 1-8 (LAN, Internet) 2 via modem/serial | Publisher: Microprose | Price: \$89.95 | Rating: G8+ | Available: Now

This trilogy title of a classic series amplifies simulation to new levels

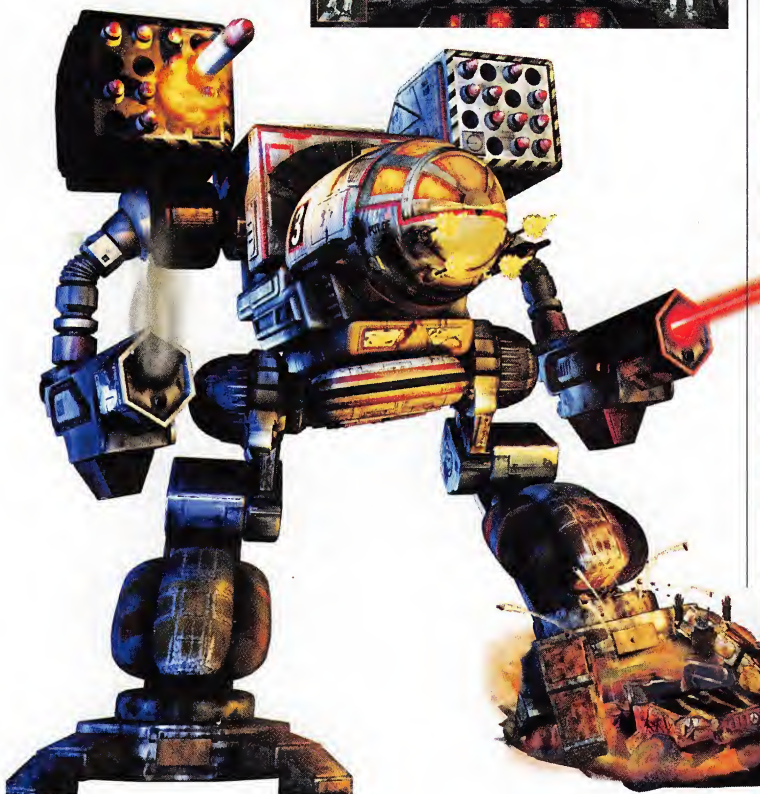
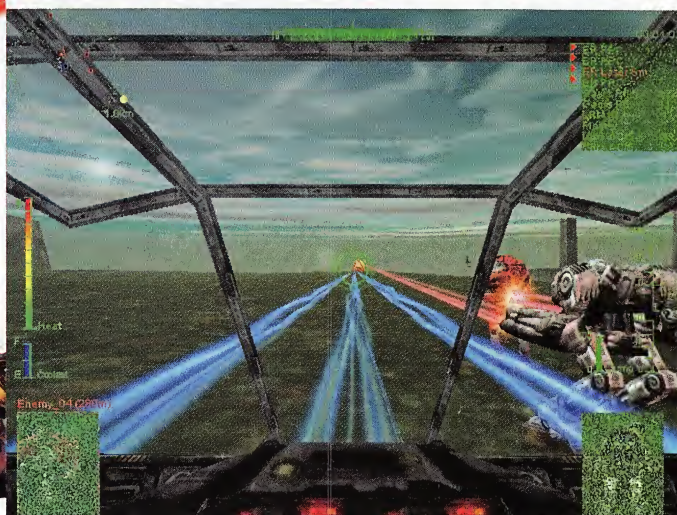
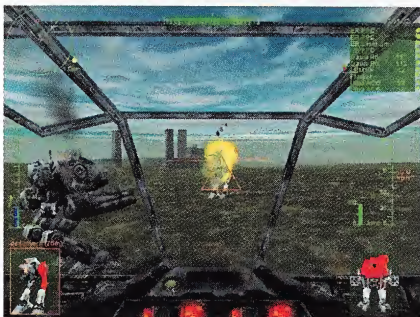
The ancient Clan of the Smoke Jaguars, the most warlike and brutally vicious faction of Mechwarriors ever to grace the face of the Earth is in severe trouble. Tired of their fanatical behaviour, the other clans have all allied in treating them as contemptuous foes, eventually resulting in the Smoke Jaguar's territory shrinking to a mere sliver, a tiny morsel of the grandiose vistas they once occupied with unnecessary force. Inside this final stronghold, their finest and most famous warriors are holding a Custer's Last Stand. Most of any invasion force will inevitably die in the conflict to finally silence their tyrannical presence.

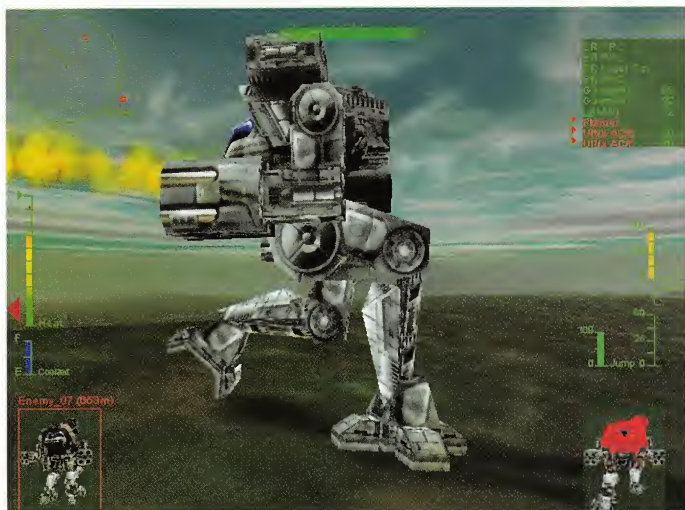
You are part of a Mech commando force, tasked with running a stealthy incursion into Smoke Jaguar territory, to cut down the fixed defences that will prevent aircraft and sup-

port vehicles from entering the hot zone. If you can do this with maximum efficiency, and take out a few vital resources in a surprise attack, you will greatly reduce the lives that must be



(above) "Morning, Fred. What's on the schedule today?"
"Extermination with extreme prejudice, Harry. Another day at the office, eh?"





(right) The range of weapons of mass destruction you can pilot has yet again increased. Clockwise from top left - the Annihilator, Avatar, Cauldron, Diashi, Owens, Shadow, Sunder, Thor, Puma, Orion, Champion and Bushwhacker

spent in taking them down. Once behind enemy lines you must be self-sufficient, and salvage parts and ammunition from fallen enemies. The legendary army of the formidable Smoke Jaguars eagerly awaits your arrival. The die is cast. You must terminate with extreme prejudice, or die in the attempt.

Faithful

Mechwarrior 3 is an absolutely faithful continuation of the popular series that paved the way for a plethora of copycat titles. However there's only one genuine flavour of giant robot simulation, and once again it's been proven that Mechwarrior is it. Mechwarrior 3, without a doubt, has the most impressive graphics ever seen in a mecha simulation. It's literally dripping with eye-popping detail, and gregariously splashy effects. In fact it almost puts Shogo to shame, while still retaining a serious, underlying solidarity.

Solid simulation

Mechwarrior 3 gives you the satisfying tactile impression that

whatever strategy you choose, you can carry it out - if it's possible within the bounds of the game universe. This kind of freedom is only evident in simulations where the developers have created a cohesive world, rather than a pretty smoke & mirrors approximation. This is the only game I can think of where you can stand in 50 metres of water and blow up a jetty next to the shore with a giant laser gun. The wooden poles and boardwalks explode into clouds of hurtling shrapnel, while the ships crack and burn, flaming until they draw below the water line. Then you zoom in with the weapon targeting reticule to investigate a distant pontoon. Hello, there's a seagull sitting on it! A careful aim, a trigger-squeeze, and it vanishes under the scorching persuasion of 30 megawatts of helium-argon. Zooming out, you just catch a glimpse of a cloud of tiny pieces billowing outwards. This game has an astonishing depth of effects modelling. Wading shorewards, you tromp up the beach, accidentally trampling a small boathouse which



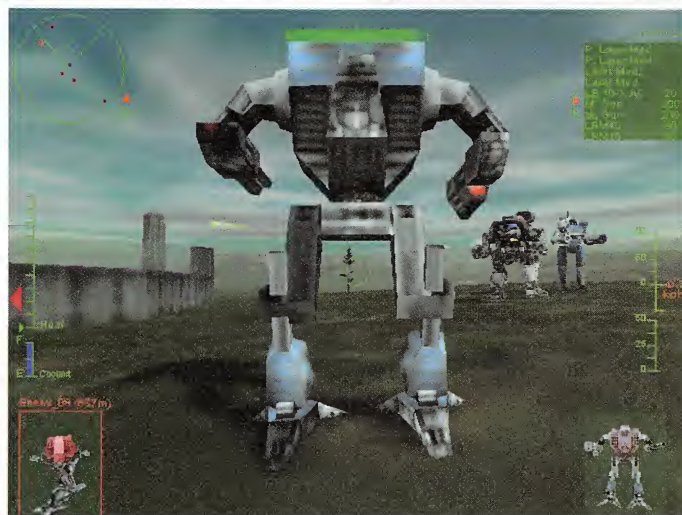


disintegrates into wreckage and ignites.

"Whoops!" you giggle. You are Mechwarrior! You are 50 tons of lumbering metal!

Lavishly detailed

Mechwarrior 3 is by far the most "expressive" sim in the trilogy, with sublime animation and cool things thrown in just for the prettiness factor, like the massive implanted footprints your Mech leaves behind. As you stampede over a variety of surfaces, you leave varying crushed impressions in sand, concrete and dirt, which are accompanied by respective, thundering sound effects. Mechs cast fully-detailed shadows onto the terrain, while cities are awash with tiny details like the wreckage of metal staircases dangling from buildings' shattered facades. Mortar-guns create fat craters in the landscape that are so deep tanks are unable



to drive out of them. You can wander about neck deep in water, which provides an interesting alternative to crossing a bridge, and naturally provides you with near-endless heat dissipation, as your heatsinks are immersed! It's details like these

that really bring this game to life. You'll spend a first few missions thinking: "hey, I wonder if I can do this!" before you try something unprecedented. 99% of the time it will be possible: it's an impeccably modelled virtual world. Try dancing over a tank



At last, part of the secret Mechwarrior code can be revealed. Whilst engaged in a vicious melee: STRUT!

convoy as though they were squares in a hopscotch game. Remember that each foot plants a hefty 50 tons in a very condensed area. That's right, you can trample and destroy virtually anything.

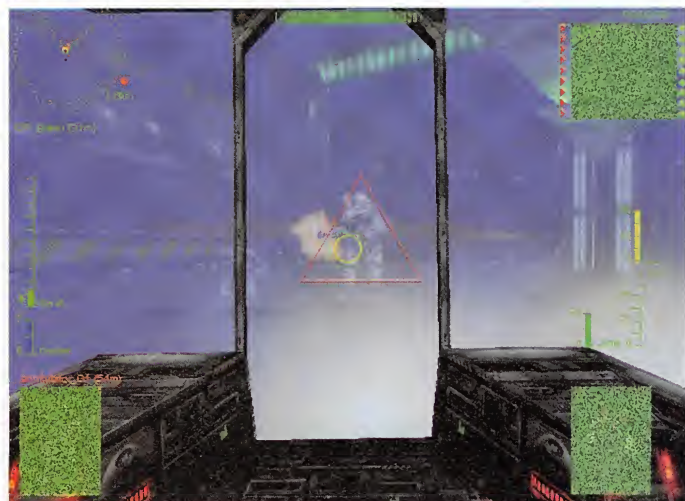
Build like a brick

Only ruthless salvage and cunning Mech customisation will see you through the later levels. The time-honoured strat-





egy that was so successful in previous Mechwarriors holds true here: a massive loadout of Lasers And Big Heatsinks Only is a near-unbeatable tactic. After all, there isn't really a great deal of strategy to be employed once you're in combat. You're in a gigantic, knuckle-dragging juggernaut with about a hundred guns sticking off it. Even the fastest Mech is pretty much a fat, easy target when you have instant-hit weapons like lasers. It comes down to the componentry and configuration of your weapons, armour and equipment.



Newbie-friendly

The Mech3 tutorials go into a whole new layer of education: almost anyone will be quickly up to speed with this level of newbie-pandering. Not that this is a very newbie-friendly game, but with this kind of training any bright student of the gaming arts will quickly become one with their Mech.

As for actual gameplay improvements Mech3 doesn't bring a whole lot. They are all very well-considered enhancements though. Basically, you can now Crouch the Mech, you can directionally steer your

jump-jets mid flight, and your allied mechs can be given much more comprehensive instructions than before, including going off to complete entire mission objectives on their own. You can also call for a mobile repair crew to move in and patch you up once you have secured a position.

Outstanding

The new military focus in the game makes more sense once you know that some of the developers that worked on Mech3 are actual ex-military simulation programmers. Er, wow. No wonder it's so good, really. It's an outstanding game in a genre that was considered totally "milked". Not quite, but almost.

Ed Dawson

Mecha's cross-channel swim attempt went horribly wrong as the French coast shrunk further with each missile fired...

GOLD

91%

For

The best Mecha simulation ever made. A winning combination of solid theory mixed with splashy graphics. Pure class.

Against

The missions don't offer too much variation from the established Mech genre, but hell, we're having fun!

Need

Wing95/98, P166, 32MB RAM, 16-bit colour capable 2MB video card, 240 MB hard disk space, 2x CD-ROM

Want

P200, 64MB RAM, 4x CD-ROM, 360MB hard disk space, Joystick, 3D graphics accelerator

3D SUPPORT

D3D



Discworld Noir

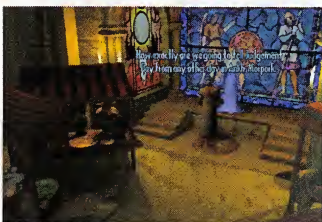
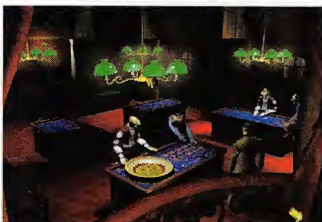
Genre: Adventure | Players: 1 | Developer: Perfect Entertainment | Publisher: GT Interactive | Price: \$TBA | Rating: M | Available: Now

With a manner straight out of Pratchett's Discworld series, David was perfect for the job of investigating this latest adventure game from Perfect.

The Octarine Parrot was a respectable place. Well, that's if you can call anything in the city of Ankh-Morpork respectable. It is, after all, the only city on the Disc where the sewage workers are revered for their comparatively high levels of hygiene. But that said, you had to show respect to a place that even the owner and barman was proud to declare a wretched hive of scum and villainy. More to the point, what other conceivable response could there be to walking into a seedy, smoky and mostly empty tavern and coming face to face with a torch-singing troll named Sapphire who talks like a man and has the facial hair of several?

Dripping with style

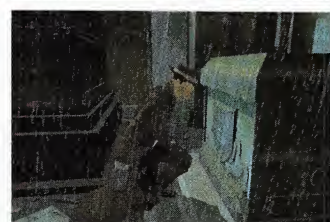
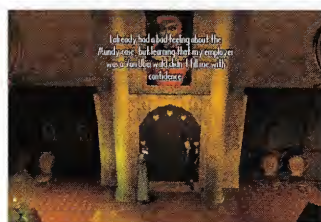
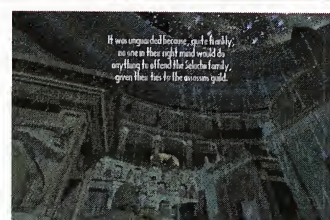
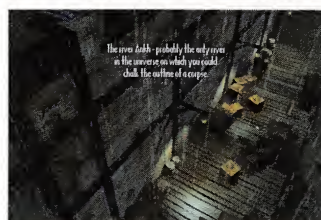
When Lewton, the bitter and twisted star of the game, first enters the Parrot (as it is affectionately known, albeit with little affection it must said), Sapphire



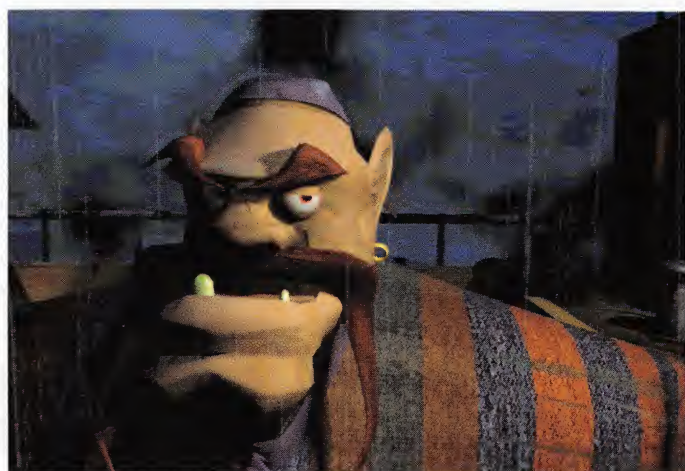
is bellowing her way through a rather different version of "Big Spender". It begins: "The minute you walked through the wall... I could see you were a troll of destruction..." and only gets worse from then on. But I'm getting ahead of my own story here. Let's rewind it all back to when Carlotta turned up at Lewton's office one night.

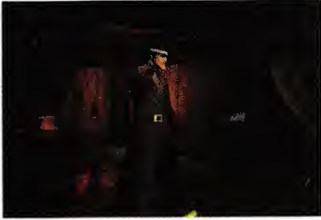
Ambiguous Intentions

Sure, you might say it was the last thing he needed at a time like that. But when you're as low as Lewton, clinging to drink and despair like they represented his last shred of humanity (which, in

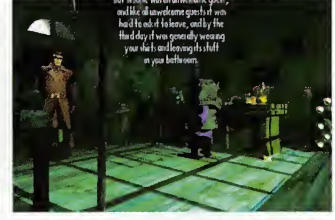
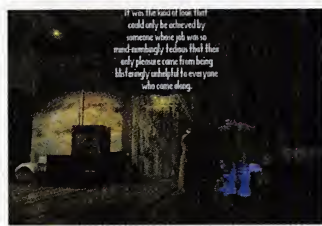


(above right) Lewton investigating a tomb, in a trenchcoat, in the rain, in the middle of the night.





(right) Lewton investigating the docks, in a trenchcoat, in the rain, in the middle of the night.



truth, they probably did), anything was going to look like up from there. Viewing the world through the bottom of a glass tends to distort your perception. You could view Carlotta from any angle, though, and she'd still manage to look good. No wonder Lewton accepted her case without even asking for his payment up front. Well, actually, it may have had more to do with the fact that it'd been a month since he quit the Watch to become a private investigator and his cases closed currently tallied zero, but never mind.

Clichéd characters

Carlotta, then, perched libiduously atop Lewton's desk, said she wanted him to find a man

called Mundy. He and Carlotta were lovers, apparently, although she was unable to provide any kind of useful description of him. Carlotta couldn't even say how tall Mundy was because, as she explained so herself, she never pictured him standing up. Clearly, it was going to be a tough case. But that was okay - Carlotta was a tough woman, Lewton was suitably hard-boiled and the world was regularly first in line to kick you when you were down.

Amusingly perplexing

It started slowly, as you might have expected. After a month out



of action, Lewton needed to brush up his detective skills. Within moments he'd manage to deduce that he was in a point-and-click adventure game, but its exact nature was troubling. Something was bugging him, something he couldn't quite put his finger on. And it wasn't just that he couldn't "shake the feeling that sooner or later someone is going to get their arm cut off".

Clue-do

The interface was easy enough to master. Left-clicks got him walking places and it felt good to be out of the office for a change. Right-clicks allowed him to examine things, though, with these things being in Ankh-Morpork, this felt less good. Soon it was all coming back to him. Upon discovering a clue, an icon would appear in the top left corner of the screen depicting a hand scribbling in a notebook.

Thus alerted, Lewton was able to leaf through his notes and draw connections between the clues. For example, clicking on Carlotta then Mundy's name in the Contacts & Suspects list elicited the following thought: "Carlotta claims Mundy was her lover. The question had to be, is she telling the truth?" Other clues would trigger further comments, often providing additional clues or just a nudge in

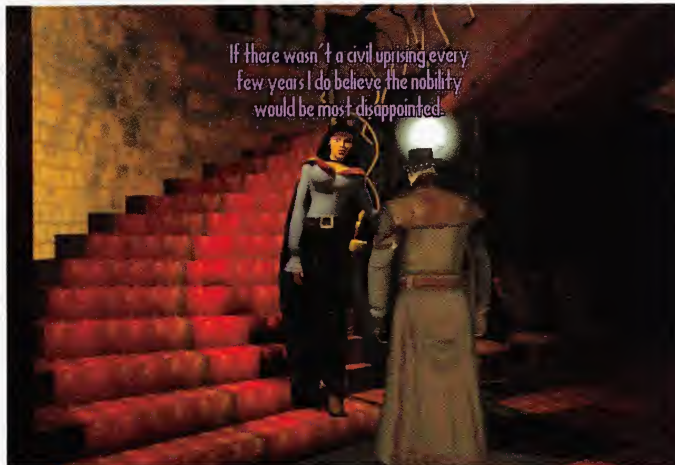
the right direction. Handily, as Lewton comments along the lines of "I'm can't imagine Malachite had anything to do with that" or whatever, they also serve to steer him clear of red herrings.

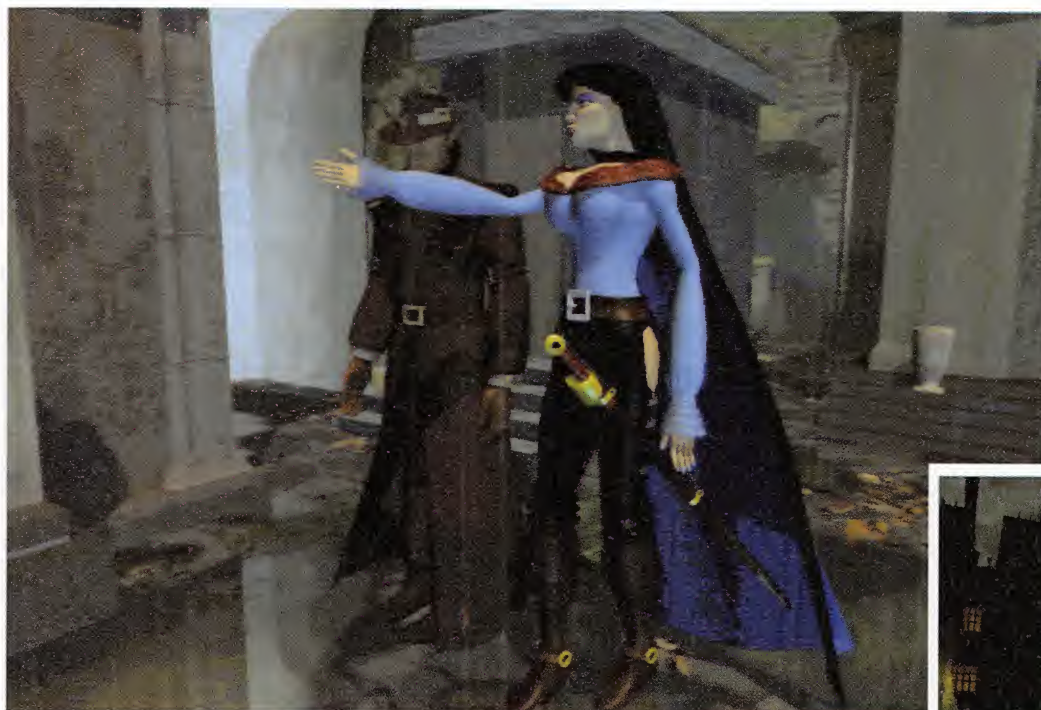
Refreshingly different

Like any half-decent private investigator, the most effective course of action for Lewton was interrogation. Thus, much of the gameplay involved chatting with people, probing them with searingly insightful questions and devastatingly deadpan insults. Amid collecting and connecting clues from various locations around town, asking people about the right subjects and following up leads, there's precious little room left for traditional adventure gameplay. A distinct lack of Lucasarts-esque object-based puzzles lends Discworld Noir a refreshing atmosphere and allows the cleverly-realised story some room to breathe. Which, in this city, was greatly appreciated.

Stalled progress

Unfortunately, the Mundy case wasn't progressing well, with Lewton hitting more dead-ends than he'd normally expect to stumble into on the streets of Ankh-Morpork. Not even Nobby, Lewton's former colleague on the Watch and the only man he knew who could possibly pass for a friend, was willing to lend assistance. This was especially so after Lewton was found lying unconscious in a hotel room with only a dead man for a company. With his





(above) Lewton investigating Carlotta, in a trenchcoat, in the rain, in the middle of the night. There's a theme here somewhere...

eyes gouged out, the corpse beared all the hallmarks of another victim of the Counterweight Killings - a series of "re-dualistic murders", as Nobby put it, presently entertaining the citizens of Ankh-Morpork. "You could say this about Nobby: deep down he was a good man. Well, deep down he was probably a man. Good might be stretching it a bit." In this, Lewton was probably right.

Sporadically humorous

Nobby is one of several well-known Discworld characters who makes a cameo appearance, the rest are entirely the creations of developer, Perfect Entertainment. While Lewton is an inspired lead hero and many of the other minor characters give as good they get, there are just as many who don't work at all. I get the feeling that the developers tried too hard to

Atypical adventure fare

Discworld Noir's great strength is its unique take on the adventure game genre. Ironically, through its rejection of many of what we've come to think of as essential adventure gameplay elements (that is, those silly illogical puzzles), Noir succeeds in underlining the fact that it's the story above all else that an adventure game needs. Which is why I chose to give you a taste of that story throughout this review, instead of concentrating on how it plays.

Parody of Noir

The Discworld atmosphere is restrained, although fans will still find much to enjoy. For me the game works best when considered as a parody of film noir, which is certainly what it was intended to be. Overall Discworld Noir one of the strongest adventure games I've played in ages.

David J. Wildgoose



PLUS+



<http://pimall.com/>

The Private Investigator's Mall. Includes links to all things related to the world of the Private Dick.

83%

■ For

Great narrative with two cleverly intertwined plot strands. Boasts as many unexpected twists and turns as you would, erm... expect from any good film noir tale. Dark and seedy atmosphere enhanced by some enticing visuals and a very cool soundtrack. Lewton is just a great game anti-hero.

■ Against

Some of the humour falls flat. Several of the characters just leave you irritated. Unlikely to convince anyone who doesn't like adventure games, despite the departures from tradition in the gameplay.

■ Need

P133, 16MB RAM

■ Want

P200, 32MB RAM

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Official Formula 1 Racing

Genre: Racing Sim | Players: 1-12 TCP/IP or IPX | Developer: Eidos | Publisher: Ozisoft | Price: \$TBA | Rating: G | Available: Mid 99

It's official and it looks great. But where's the challenge?

When considering Formula One games, it's important to distinguish between the two types of racing fanatics who stand on either side of the track. On one side there are the hardcore racing nutters, who eschew visceral arcade action and power slides for ultra realism. A game that caters to this mob will include a plethora of customisation routines and embrace such subtle details as wind velocity and tire camber. Then, on the other side are the gamers who hang out for a game where realism is given a cursory nod and the emphasis is on high octane, console style driving. Let's make no bones about it, Eidos's Official Formula One appeals primarily to the latter group, but in the end fails to please either group.

Faithful sim

The graphics in Official Formula 1 are really only a few cylinders short of perfect. The game is natively coded in both Direct3d and Glide, allowing for pleasant graphics and compatibility over a wide range of graphics cards. With a midrange to high-end PC and a 3D card, the game looks great, although users of low- to midrange machines will pay the price when the number of cars onscreen can cause the frame rate to bog down considerably. It would have been nice if the game could have adjusted the graphics on-the-fly



(above) Forget the five red lights, this is how we want to see all F1 races started. Big letters spelling out "Race" falling from the sky...

to keep the frame rate consistent. Right from the lush green forests that line Hockenheim to the claustrophobic streets of Monaco, each F1 track is faithfully recreated in both look and layout. The cars are well detailed and comprised of a huge amount of polygons and sharp texturing. Virtually every imaginable viewpoint and external camera angle

is supported, with subtle camera movements as you accelerate and brake. But for me, the most impressive graphical achievement was the finely constructed interior view. The driver's arms are impressively animated and, unlike most virtual cockpits, the dials and instrument panels are easily legible. The car damage system is very effective and the



(above left) The view most cars have had of the Williams team this season - behind them.

(left) Nice to see the gloves are colour-coordinated too.

car drives in a manner corresponding to the damage you have received on screen. Above all, however, it is the sense of speed that makes the driving model impressive. In all, a very faithful representation of white knuckle driving.

Un-sound

The depth of visual detail might lead you to believe that Official Formula 1 will provide an absorbing ride. Sadly, the sound is a different matter altogether. One of the most important aspects of a realistic F1 game is the scream of the engine. Despite owning a behemoth of a sound system, the racing cars still sounded like a castrated hamster rather than 850 horsepower of racing goodness at 200mph. Direct Sound support is poorly executed, and A3d support is completely neglected (but why?). The game has no dynamic commentary, which I found to be

are based on the official 1998 world championship statistics and the Grand Prix mode is based upon the FIA World Championship. The game also comes with a decent array of multiplayer options out of the box. Up to 12 players can battle it

out over any TCP/IP connection, which should have been a blast. With the official license, all the statistics and a multiplayer mode to back it up, this game could potentially have been brilliant. But what this game really lacks is depth. It's the complete lack of options that will alienate most gamers from the green light. Even more annoying is the fact that the few options seem to have little impact on the gameplay. Gamers can only determine the realism level (either way, it

still plays eerily akin to an arcade game), tyre/fuel usage (off by default), the number of cars and the weather conditions. The developers have only allowed you to choose between sunny and wet temperament. What about misty, overcast and sleeting?

Mindless racing

What's more, the personalities of the AI competitor's seem dreadfully similar. Unlike past games, the game doesn't appear to incorporate any distinctive-



quite a relief from the usual appalling commentary. However, you are given frequent radio cues from a very ocker-sounding member of your pit team!

The basics

The game comes with a full FOA license and that means all of the major world Formula One tracks are accurately modelled, with all 11 Formula One Teams represented. The game statistics





Yeah, we know he's crap and makes mistakes all the time, but we think Murray would be perfectly suited to this game

ness between the driving styles of the AI players. The enemy cars all seem to be quite oblivious to your driving, almost as if you were invisible. Worst of all, winning the game really doesn't rely on tweaking the performance of your car, nor does it rest on your pit strategy: the game essentially comes down to the brainless act of precision accelerating and braking. The problem is that the game sucks you in with its decent graphics, holds your attention for 10 minutes and quickly becomes tedious. Even when the game is set to maximum difficulty, it is all far too easy. On my second race, with all the realism options on full and difficulty cranked up to the limit, it was a total doddle to get the pole position (this coming from the man known at

school as 'Captain Unco-ordination!'). The controls and car physics are just far too forgiving on corners, with little or no heed paid to the effects of inertia. The



nail in the coffin came with the appallingly bad menu system, the layout of which is slow, clumsy and ugly.

Hugh speaks

Seriously, Eidos, what we want in a Formula 1 Racer is alternatively a game that plays like Daytona or a completely anally retentive simulation. What we DON'T want is a regressive mixture of these two molds that fails to satisfy either the die-hard racers or the

arcade racers. In fact, is this nothing more than a hollow facsimile of a proper Formula 1 game, pretty but vacant, visually impressive yet shallow? Answers on a postage stamp in no more than one word, with three letters, starting with 'y' and ending in 'es'.

Call me old-school, but it's back to Indy Car Racing 2 for me.

H. P. Norton-Smith

PLUS⁺



<http://www3.fia.com>
Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile - THE worldwide motoring organization

65%

For

Strong graphics, easy to set up multiplayer. Good control and decent physics model.

Against

Far too easy even at hardest level. Not enough options, tweaks and detail. Crap sound.

Need

P200, 32 Mb RAM, 4mb Video Card

Want

P11 233, 64 Mb RAM, 8+ meg 3D Card

3D SUPPORT

D3D and Glide



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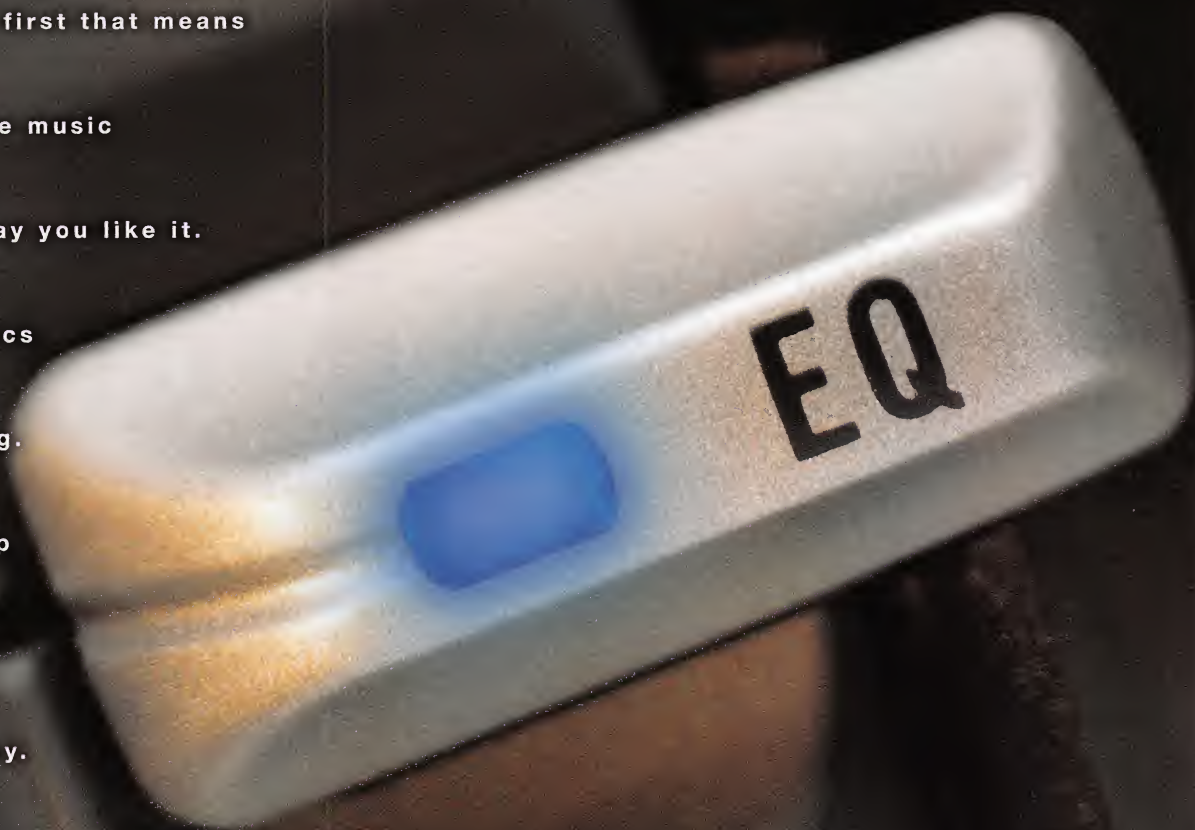
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EEQ. One button. Sensational sound.

Pioneer

Everquest

Genre: Online RPG | Players: Thousands | Publisher: Sony | Price: \$TBA | Rating: M15+ | Available: Now

A massive sociological experiment or a place for geeks with no real-life social skills to hang out? Welcome again to the Online RPG.



(above) Crealy the Barbarian easily defeats his opponent by tying the poor beast's ankles together

If the thought of spending hundreds of hours logged on to the internet appeals to you, then read on. If not, then stop reading right now, because that's the kind of commitment the latest online RPG, Everquest, takes to play.

I must admit that I was initially very sceptical about this game - the fact that you have to give your credit card details before you even get started made me very suspicious. But once I had created a character and seen the gorgeous 3D rendered graphics I was sold.

Beastly things! Shoo! Shoo!

Like all good RPGs, Everquest is set in an imaginary world where beastly beings roam about pillaging, plundering and killing for thrills. In the world of

Norrath there are the usual RPG races to choose from such as Humans and Dwarves, as well as a few extras like Dark Elves, Erudites, High Elves, Ogres, Trolls and Wood Elves.



"Who's scruffy lookin'?"

The ability to customise your character's face according to their charisma is another novelty - the butt-ugly female troll is a sight to behold. Next you choose a class, of which there are 12, your abilities, and your religion. But in the massive landscapes of Norrath your success seems to depend on your navigational



expertise as much as your choice of character.

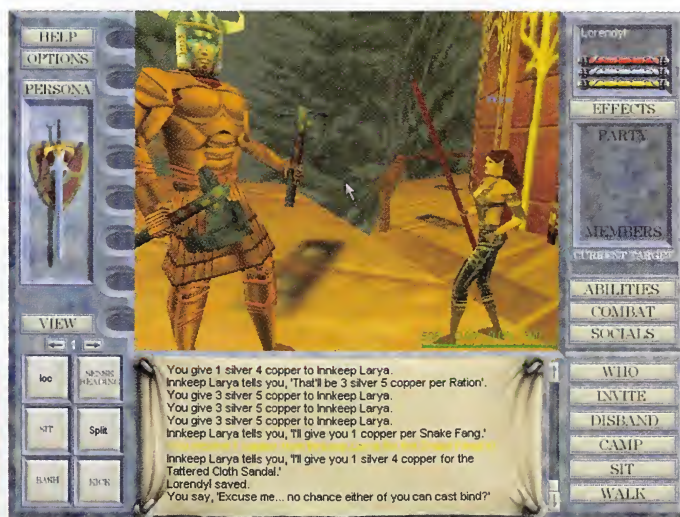
As an example, in my first game I created a swarthy barbarian character and had my name randomly generated as "Crealy". I then found myself in the frozen city of Halas surrounded by like-minded barbarians looking for someone to kill. After an hour or so of aimless wandering I met a friendly cleric called Rygath (who was actually from Adelaide) and he was kind enough to show me the ropes. He took me to a friendly guild-master who gave me some armour and showed me how to use my special abilities.

Non-PC PCs?

My new friend also told me to be wary of wandering monsters (of which there are many) and to stay close to the NPC guards for protection. I asked him where we should go next and he said I should just hang around and kill wandering monsters until I had enough experience under my belt to go on a quest. After being killed three times I started to get the hang of combat and was just beginning to enjoy myself when my partner from Adelaide split and I was left alone again.

Most of the players I encountered were already in groups and

wouldn't let me join them. Another two hours of wandering passed before I met Tsilla from San Francisco, who offered me every conceivable kind of sexual intercourse and then proceeded to thrash me over the head with her sword!





Thoughtful combat

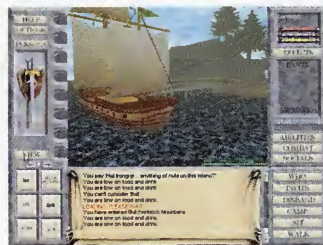
Everquest has overcome the problem of time lag in combat (which plagued point and click fest games like Diablo) with the use of the "auto-attack" button - all you have to do is select a weapon, click on the enemy and hit the "A" key and the computer will attack for you, according to your character's skill level. But while this may provide a more even game, it also makes for less interesting combat sequences, as you all you tend to do is hit the "A" button once then sit back and watch the action.

One thing that does make combat more interesting though is the coloured messages which appear above creatures in the game. These give you an indication of their strength - those with a green message above them are easy to kill, while yellow messages are a bit of a gamble, and anything with a red message you should leave well alone.

Be a geek online too

The folks at 989 Studios have done a sterling job at creating a unique world of cities, forests and deserts. You can train in mundane arts such as jewel craft, tailoring, or even brewing. You can live the life of a merchant, selling your wares to other travellers, or you can try and become the greatest champion of the land.

The world of Norrath comprises many zones. These zones are smaller, interlinked pieces of the full map and are used to break the world into smaller pieces to reduce lag and improve game performance.



What am I doing here?

After playing Everquest for a few days straight I started to ask myself a few basic questions, such as "What am I doing talking to people who call themselves Sunshine the Ogrelette?" and "How long has it been since I exercised?". A vague feeling of uneasiness overcame me and I had to log off. But it wasn't long before I realised that the virtual world has a lot to offer that the real world doesn't, and soon I was itching to get back into it.

More than just a game

To quote from one of Everquest's many fan club sites:



"The computer game has become a primarily sensory experience, rather than one

about drama, dialogue, and characters. While EverQuest manages to obtain the sensory overload so many gamers desire, its true masterpiece achievement is not the Ever popular graphics, but is the Ever evolving Quest. Its initial hook are its effects for sure, but what will keep you playing for the days, weeks, and months to come is its substance. EverQuest begs the industry to move on to the next evolutionary step, one that knows that there are more than just static, linear environments."

In short, EverQuest is more of an experience than a computer game.

Kieran Oakley

A sense of unease gripped Crealy when he realised someone had been watching him take a leak in the woods

GOLD
90%

■ For

Virtually unlimited 3D environment full of new players to meet, exceptional graphics, excellent personal options such as the ability to wave and shout at people which makes your character more human.

■ Against

Only for the hard-core internet gamer, pay as you play, 500MB hard drive space, limited combat control.

■ Need

Win 95/98, P166, 32MB RAM, 500MB hard drive space, 28k modem, 3D Accelerator card

■ Want

P200+, 64MB RAM, 56k modem

3D SUPPORT

D3D



Star Trek Birth of the Federation

Genre: Strategy | Players: 1-5 | Developer: MicroProse | Publisher: Microprose | Price: \$89.95 | Rating: G | Available: Now

"Sir, what about the Prime Directive?"

"Do I look like a bald Frenchman? I said attack!"

What do you get if you mix the legendary gameplay of Master of Orion 2 (MOO2) with the worldwide franchise that is Star Trek? One fantastic game that integrates all the best parts of MOO2 with the utopian morals of mankind, the bloodthirsty cries of the Klingons, and the devious undercurrents of the Romulans. That, and Microprose get to make wads of cash out of the Trekkian fan base.

Return of MOO

The developers who created BOTF are the same boys who made Civilization II and Master of Orion II. If you've been holding out for the next MOO with bated breath, waiting once more for that brilliant balance of gameplay and strategy, then BOTF is what you've been waiting for.

BOTF game has an excellent mix of diplomacy, resource management, and strategy - but not so much that you get drowned in numbers and details. This is why the MOO series were so successful, because they combined just enough of each attribute to make the game involving but not so much that you spent ages doing your turn and less time enjoying being the omnipotent power that you are.

In this respect BOTF has the formula down to a fine art. There are plenty of technologies to research (six areas consisting of ten tech levels each), structures to build (everything from



Make all the different coloured dots your colour! Over several hours... now THIS is fun!

subspace scanners to space stations) and all sorts of diplomatic actions (ranging from affiliations to war pacts), but managing all these resources is easily achieved and this makes a huge difference to the gameplay. Depending on how you look at it, a game like BOTF is the FPS of the strategy world - it's quick, easy, and fun - whereas games such as Alpha Centauri sit at the other end of the strategic spectrum focusing on enjoyment through greater depth and control.

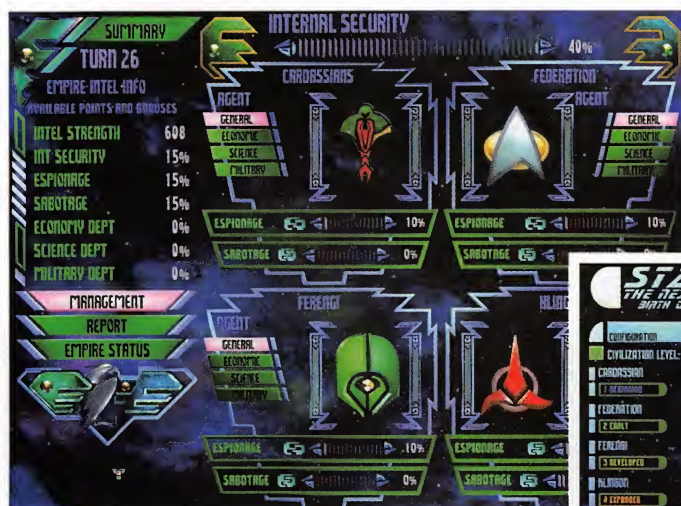


Prime Directive? Pah!

The game revolves around five races - the Federation, the Klingons, the Romulans, the Cardassians and, in a nice touch, the Ferengi. Each understand-

ably has its own advantages and disadvantages (Ferengi get trade bonuses, Klingons fare better in battles, Cardassians are particularly good at spying, and so on), but more than this the game has a different interface depending on which race you play. If you're a fan of the series you'll recognise the LCARS interface of a modern Federation starship. But have you ever wondered what the Ferengi interface is like? What about the Romulans? Each interface is complete with its own graphics, chirps, whistles and computer voice. It's an excellent touch to the game, as it gives each race a different feel - looking at the sharp red lines of the Klingon interface just gives rise to feelings of relentless conquering, barking orders in Klingon, and vowing to wreck revenge





Tek-tech galore! We don't understand any of it, but golly it's cool!



"No, I'd like a bigger ship thanks."

against the Federation for their judicious (and jealous) use of tight clothing on their females - it's awfully distracting to a war crazed Klingon you know.

Visual overload

However it's also the interface that is the game's only downside. The lavish use of colour for all races makes the interface look pretty and cool, but after a half an hour of empire building it starts to get

hard on the eyes - quickly navigating your resources when there's so much visual information on screen is tiring.

Production could have been handled slightly better as well - you can't insert tasks into the production queue, you can only add to it, and it's also limited to a maximum five tasks. If you've lined up enough jobs to carry a planet for the next ten turns, but suddenly find your needs changing and want something urgent-

ly, you have to delete the queue and rebuild it. Pain in the royal Ferengi rear end.

On a milder note, the music can also get annoying quickly, but then that's probably a matter of taste. The orchestral Star Trek music has always been a bit over-dramatic in the series and you won't find solace in BOTF, unless of course you turn the music off. This is highly recommended.

Fancy battles

Another nice feature is combat resolution. Here you get to see a 3D environment of the battle area with all the participants rendered in three dimensional, light source shaded, glory. From here you can click on ships, give them battle orders and then, when you're ready, let the battle run for a turn after which you can again specify orders and watch the ships duke it out. The best part of all this is that you get to replay the whole battle afterwards, replete with the battle cries of the ships commanders, and see the fight uninterrupted by players taking turns. This is something all turn based strategy games should have.

All up BOTF is thoroughly enjoyable, and I found myself hooked on the first game. I'd highly recommend playing it multiplayer with pals with each player role-playing the race they choose - because each race has particular advantages and disadvantages, it pays to play into the model. Don't expect to get far in espionage as a Klingon, rather play the part and use war as means of expression.

Ashton Mills

PLUS+



www.botf.com/

A fan site that's packed with more information than the Microprose page. If it's BOTF related, start here.

GOLD

90%

For

Easy to get into MOO2 clone with everything the budding empire builder wants. The different interfaces and abilities for each race adds replayability and a 3D tactical screen makes battles a joy to watch. Faithful to the Star Trek universe to the letter.

Against

Interface can be tiring after a while, planetary production could have been handled better. Genuinely annoying music - faithful to the Star Trek universe.

Need

P200, 32M RAM, 180M disk space

Want

PII, 64M RAM

3D SUPPORT

3D card not required

Street Wars Constructor Underground

Genre: RTS/Management Sim | Players: 1 | Developer: Studio 3 | Publisher: GT Interactive | Price: \$TBA | Rating: TBA | Available: Now

Making money by exploiting human misery? Who would have thought such a thing could be possible?

Set during the infamous American gangster era of the 1920's and 1930's, *Street Wars: Constructor Underground* builds on the highly successful formula of *Constructor*. *Street Wars* places the player in the (hopefully devoid of concrete) shoes of an aspiring young hooligan eager to please the Godfather and even more eager to establish an empire of his own. Ruthlessness, guile and shrewd business sense are the ingredients necessary for success.

Anti-sobriety

Divided into five locations of increasing size and complexity, *Street Wars* begins in the backwater hole known as Hick Town. With continued success the campaign branches out into locales as diverse as Rangoon, Burma and the Mecca of organised crime, Capitol City. Much of the game centres on the acquisition of land and the establishment of a business empire. Vacant land is purchased from the city in large blocks. Upon these lots a wide variety of buildings can be constructed. It's also possible to construct buildings on property owned by rival families. This tactic serves to intimidate or infuriate them and saves significant amounts of money at the same time. Buildings that can be constructed range from lowly businesses like Soup Kitchens and seedy Drinking Dens to



At unfortunate accident in a local brothel saw a sex aid become irretrievably lodged in the Godfather's lower lip

'respectable' establishments like Casinos and Theatres. Of course a fair smattering of less salubrious establishments can also be built.

Sim Brothel

From humble beginnings great things arise; this is the very nature of *Street Wars*. Gadget Factories manufacture everything from caskets to curtains, and are an integral part of the game. Gadgets are used to upgrade businesses and con-

struct amenities in order to keep tenants happy. Industrial ovens and fancy lighting can transform a dingy Soup Kitchen into a swanky five star Restaurant, while sex aids and beds can convert a Peep Show into a lucrative Brothel.

The game's interface is simplistic, yet highly effective in enabling the player to quickly and easily control their minions and keep a watchful eye on their enterprises. Characters are ordered around using simple mouse clicks ala *Command & Conquer*. Workers can be





ordered to construction sites, Fixers tasked with patrolling streets to perform maintenance and Gangsters occupied with 'wet work', intimidation and extortion. Tenants of businesses and residential buildings can also be put to work earning additional money for the family, or helping create future tenants.

Plastic action

A variety of toolbars serve to keep the player apprised of the status of their burgeoning (or sometimes faltering) criminal empire, and give the player detailed control over every aspect of its operation. The duties of

various business and residential tenants, the percentage of profits donated to Police 'charity' funds and the manufacture of gadgets can be monitored and altered using these toolbars. The interface also features a small view screen in the bottom right corner, through which the actions of employees can be observed. These actions are displayed in the form of short sequences animated in a manner that gives the characters a slick, cartoon-ish and almost plastic appearance.

Machiavellian machines of death

A game highlight is the inclusion of the 'Undesirables'. These social deviants roam the streets, wreaking havoc and generally making a nuisance of themselves. The power of these 'Undesirables' can be harnessed and used to further the player's own twisted agenda, provided the player is



willing to uphold their end of the bargain. Many 'Undesirables' operate in devastatingly effective and extremely humorous ways. Lola, purveyor of *ahem* carnal delights, is particularly adept at diverting the attention of the local constabulary. And Holy Joe, ordained minister and proprietor of Holy Joe's Bingo Parlour and Hostage Negotiation Centre, is able to rake in 'collection' money and negotiate the speedy release of incarcerated hit-men. Others forgo subtlety, employing Machiavellian machines of death to quickly dispose of pesky rival family members. While sometimes proving instrumental in the downfall of opposing factions, the 'Undesirables' are freelancers at heart. Loyalty is a concept as foreign to them as morality, and this makes hiring them before any competitors get the chance to a high priority.

Jerk-free gameplay

On the whole, Street Wars' visuals are fairly impressive. The crisp appearance of the characters and buildings makes correct identification a simple matter.



Smooth character and ambient animations mean jerk-free gameplay even when the screen is teeming with action. Rather than emulating existing graphical styles, the developers opted to create their own, lending a unique atmosphere and an easily identifiable style to the game. Sound is also up to scratch with amusing sound effects tailored to every conceivable event and action.

Overall, Street Wars: Constructor

Thoughtful game design abounds in Street Wars. The handgun mouse pointer is a particularly nice touch.

Brett Robinson

PLUS+



<http://members.tripod.com/~orgcrime/index2.htm>

The Organized Crime registry. Comprehensive site featuring pertinent info on the Russian mafia, the Yakuza and other organised crime syndicates

74%

For
Unique gameplay with a refreshingly humorous bent.

Against
Gameplay becomes somewhat repetitive.

Need
P200, 32M RAM, 180M disk space

Want
P300, 32MB RAM, 10X CDROM

3D SUPPORT

None

Fleet Command

Genre: Strategy | Players: 1-4 (LAN-IPX/SPX, Internet-TCP/IP) | Developer: Janes | Publisher: EA | Price: \$89.95 | Rating: G | Available: Now

I mean, really, call it what you want, but this is Harpoon 3D, which is just the way we'd like it!

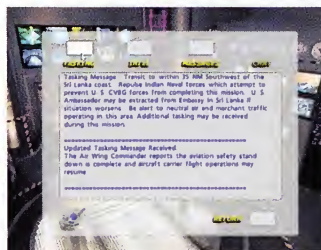
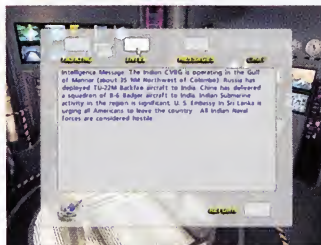
"Track ID 5530! "Inbound air object 150 miles at 270, altitude 25000 and falling, speed Mach 1.5 and increasing". "Track 5530 identified as TU-22M Backfire!" "Track 5530 turning to 250. New Tracks! Viper, Viper, Viper! Multiple inbound air objects 140 miles at 270, Mach 3 and flight profiles of AS-4 Anti-Ship Missiles. Impact 4 minutes!" Light up the air search radars, launch SM-2 SAMs, launch the Alert Five fighters, weapons free on CWIS." Hot stuff, and mixture of audible crew feedback and your orders is what you hear, see and feel when in the hot seat in Fleet Command (FC). This will test your capacity to assimilate multiple information flows and make real time decisions in credible scenarios.

Is Jane's, is good

FC has been designed by Sonalysts, the same company that designed 688(I) Hunter/Killer. This gives FC immediate credibility because Hunter/Killer is already recognised as the most realistic nuclear attack sub simulation. What's more, Sonalysts also design MILSPEC software for the US Navy and Marine Corps. FC also bears the Jane's Military Simulations stamp, and as the saying goes, when you buy a Jane's sim you pay for the manual and the CD comes free!

War is hell

This is often enough to scare off all but die-hard military simulation fanatics who memorise important issues such as the length of a Mk 48 torpedo. But not so with FC; the manual is a mere 43 pages in length, with 17 pages dedicated to the game proper, 17 pages to the Mission



Editor, and the remainder to multiplayer gaming and a very brief overview of major weapons platforms.

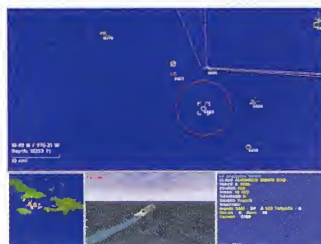
The truth is that this game

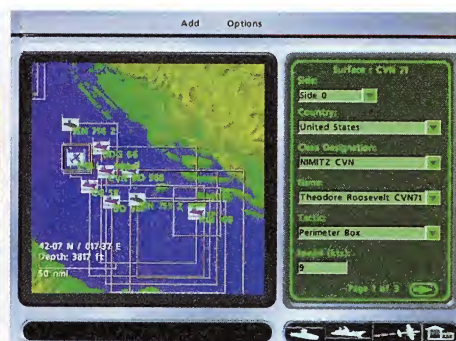
The war was lost when Chip double-parked his fighter on the carrier deck, blocking all future take-offs

strikes a balance between a casual gamer's needs and those who enjoy realism. FC achieves this through a simple point and click interface, by not requiring you to monitor the pressure in the Number 1 Reactor while still remaining situationally aware, and with action gameplay that really drives the message home that "war is hell" from any perspective.

Damn pinkos again...

The game is set in the near future when the military re-assert control over Russia which then allies itself with China to achieve nationalistic expansionist empires that threaten Japan, Taiwan and Myanmar (Burma). Then, to make the region increasingly unstable, India decides to intervene in Sri Lanka. Enter the US Navy on a UN mis-





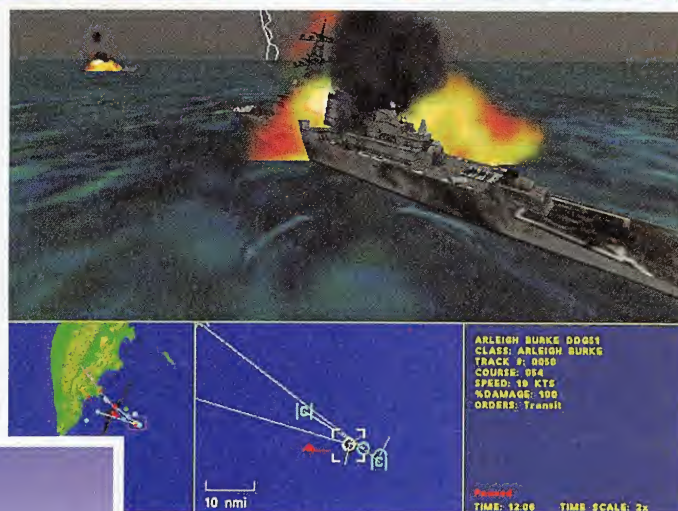
sion to make peace in the region. This sees you in four campaigns; the Bay of Bengal, the Strait of Malacca, the Taiwan Strait and the Kuril Islands.

Tempo

The first port of call is Training, and FC includes four tutorials. Here you learn the interface, air operations, ground operations and fleet and carrier operations. Is the depth of this game becoming apparent? It's not just about ship on ship encounters we're talking; it's power projection in a four dimensional battlespace, sea, air, ground and time. Time, because to win you must think and act faster than your opponent. In the military this is known as Tempo.

Uncharacteristically flawed

Each tutorial is short and holds your attention. But here I strike some difficulty with the game. A manual with little detail requires a detailed tutorial in my view. Nowhere in either do you receive instruction on how, or when, to use the active and passive radars and sensors, nor the submarines, nor the sonar dipping SH-60B/F Sea Hawks. These are integral elements of CVBG operations, so further read-



Fleet Command - the first truly FOUR-dimensional wargame. Time isn't on your side

ing is required if you want to be successful. I'll help you out here in PLUS, but this is the first time I have seen a major flaw like this in a Jane's game.

Up to date

I then recommend a close look at the Jane's Reference. Here further depth becomes apparent as you see that you have the detailed inventories of 17 navies ranging from Argentina to Russia, to Pakistan and finally Australia. A quick look at Australia even shows how up to date this is. The Landing Ship Heavy, HMAS Tobruk, is shown as being retired and replaced by the two ex-US Marine LSTs which have been renamed HMAS Kanimbla and HMAS Manoora. We're not quite there yet, but interestingly enough, my Niece serves on the latter, which will soon be launched for sea trials. Use the Reference to learn the acronyms that are required on board, eg Surface to Surface Missile (SSM) and Surface Launched Cruise Missile (SLCM). You will need to know these during game play when using the pop up menus.

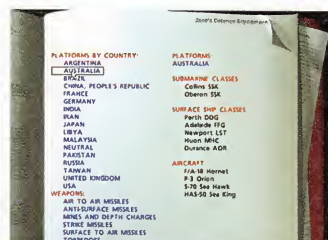
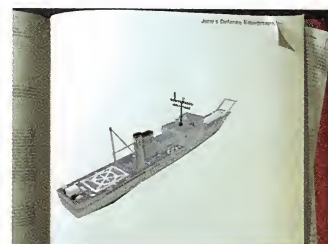
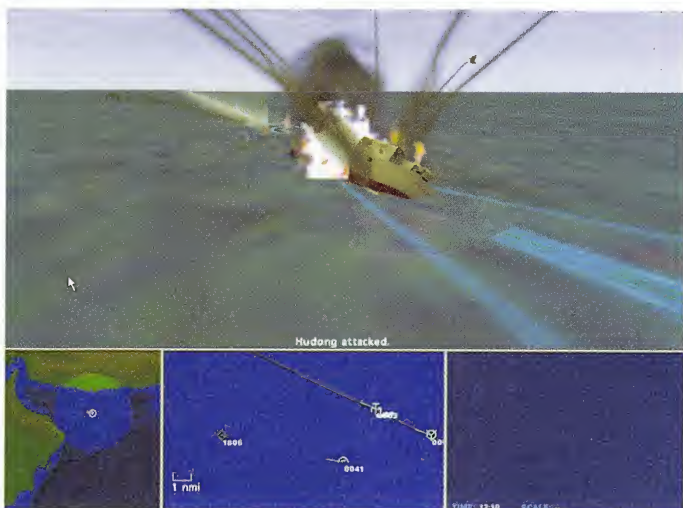
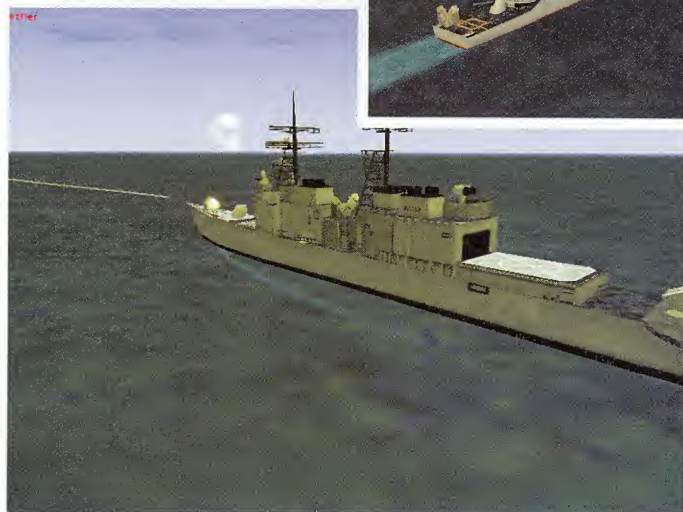
Strategic finesse

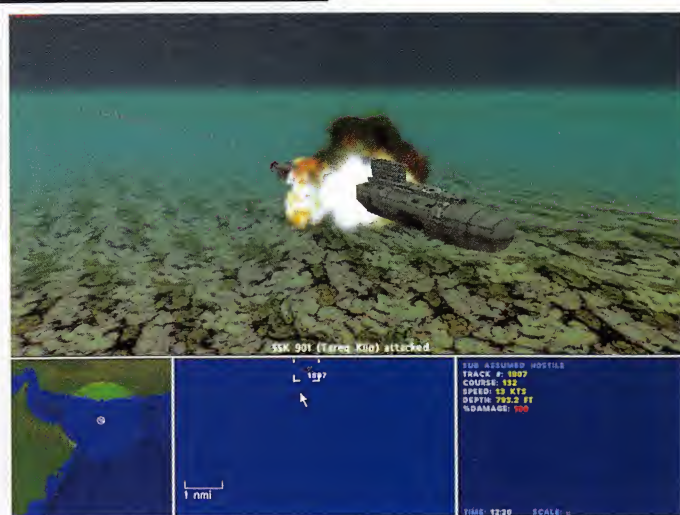
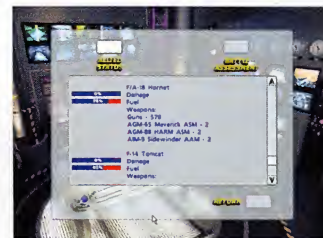
Single Missions are your

proving ground. Each mission is given a "star" rating from one to four stars to show its level difficulty. After you get past the first few missions, you find that they will keep you busy for about one hour each. Good value, and great variety as you play in most of the navies in the CD Reference, not just the US Navy. While these are canned missions, I found that if you replay a single mission, the major participants were always the same, but certain elements like time, weather and minor objects had changed. So, there is a certain amount of replayability.

Quality scripts

Campaigns are lengthy, so you definitely get value for





War is indeed hell. Especially those damn complicated map bits. Yikes!

money. The save game feature is very handy and allows you to learn lessons. And if you fail, you don't have to start at the beginning again. There are four campaign areas (as previously mentioned), and as you progress through each mission in a cam-

paign you must get an ever increasing success rate, measured in percentage effectiveness, to go to the next mission. The same rule applies when moving between campaigns. I'm disappointed here because while each mission in a campaign is

linked, this really is scripted, and I expected better. Nonetheless, the game engine can really add some spice because you don't always know all the game objectives at the outset as they are either not visible or you receive additional tasks during a game.

Written mission briefings are below par, however, each has a detailed mission video briefing. Mission credibility factors are high when you are tasked with missions such as stationing your CVBG 30 miles off Sri Lanka to prepare for a Services Assisted or Protected Evacuation from the US Embassy, or finding and destroying submerged "wolf packs" or even destroying land targets such as airfields.

MTA (Multiple Tactical Display)

The default display consists of a 2D map on the top, a regional map on the bottom left, a 3D window in the bottom centre and a Data Display on the right. The 2D and 3D windows can be swapped and the 3D given full screen viewing. Right away you

see the situation and can use the standard Naval Tactical Data Symbols (NTDS) or toggle on icons to represent objects. Launching four flights of fighters for Close Air Protection (CAP) is as easy as right clicking on the carrier and using a pop up menu to launch! Then you can maximise the 3D view and watch as the Alert 5 aircraft are launched.

Gorgeous Detail

You'll see the swing-wings on F14s extend on take off, and retract at speed. You'll also see that the other aircraft are then lifted up to the flight-deck and moved into position. Other aircraft will be "trapped" as they land. This is as real as it gets. You can stop and watch if you dare to take the time! Here you will see that real time delays are imposed as flight-deck crew move the aircraft!

Once you have adequate air cover, launch anti-submarine helos to drop sonar buoys and/or conduct active sonar dipping, and send other aircraft to identify unknown objects. Plan Flight





SAMs, CWIS, MILSPEC, SH-60B/F, CVBG, SSM, HMAS, SLCM, NTDS, CAP, SEAD, ROE, ASM! Ah, of course...

ate ordinance for the target. Then use a targeting symbol to direct fire. The AI is

Corridors, these are safe havens for your aircraft, rally points where high-speed attack aircraft can circle while you send in a barrage of cruise missiles, naval gunfire support, or even a SEAD mission. All the way you must be aware of your management responsibilities. Adjust the height and speed of the aircraft to conserve fuel, direct them to be stealthy or noisy, and you even have the same level of control on surface and sub-surface vessels. If you own a 3D sound card, get ready for some all-round sound action!

Once hostiles are encountered and your rules of engagement (ROE) allow it, use the pop up menus to select the appropri-

sufficiently smart that it if misses, the ship, sub or aircraft will re-acquire until the target is destroyed; this allows you to get on and direct other activities in the battlespace.

Real, live 3D war!

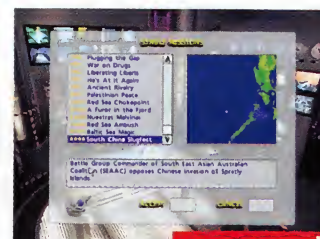
FC's 3D graphics stand-out as absolute winners in maritime gameplay. Sure, there's no waves, but every weather condition is simulated. Click on an enemy ship as one of your ASMs is on the final approach. You will see the ship launch SAMs, then as the ASM gets closer, the ship's Close In Weapons System (CWIS) will open up with a "buuuuuurp" that will rattle the best

of you. Sometimes it's successful, sometimes not! That's war!

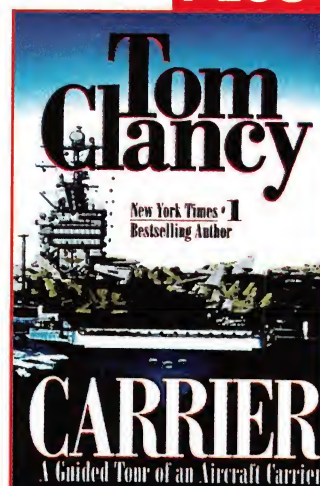
A Mission Editor is included and is of the quality expected of Jane's. Missions with up to seven sides can be constructed, saved and used in stand-alone or multi-player mode. Multiplayer options are flexible with up to four players at one time, and you can ally yourself with someone else or a computer. Good stuff, and I found that using Jane's Combat Net was simple, with many willing participants ready to fight to the death.

There's so much in this game that casual gamers will find it difficult as the missions get harder, while experienced simmers will relish the challenge of kill or be killed.

Major Ian Lindgren



PLUS+



Get the facts on Carrier Based Operations in *Carrier, A Guided Tour of an Aircraft Carrier* by Tom Clancy. Carrier history, combined and joint task force tactics, and the latest updates on aircraft and weaponry. If FC is not enough, and you want your heart in your throat for 725 pages, I recommend *Red Storm Rising*, again by Tom Clancy. Heart stopping air, land and sea action; NATO on Russian forces.

89%

For
Minimum learning curve. Immersive tactical realism that doesn't go too deep. Real-time supporting 3D graphics. A Mission Editor that can be used in stand-alone and multi-player mode. Easy to use point and click interface

Against
Insufficient instructions on how to use the more complex systems. No random mission generator

Need
P200 with 3D acceleration and 64 MB RAM

Want
PII 400 with 3D acceleration and 64 MB RAM

3D SUPPORT

D3D and 3dfx

Breakneck

Genre: Racing | Players: 1-8 | Developer: Synthetic | Publisher: THQ | Price: \$TBA | Rating: G | Available: TBA

Practically all the cool car sim games put into one pack.

One of those silly car mats you find at the markets; "Get In, Sit Down, Shut Up and Hang On" is exactly what you'll want to put under your computer when you play this game. Breakneck is an awesome 3D-sim car racing game. Not only do you get to select from a wide range of modified sports cars and the good old classics, but you also get to choose from a city bus, go-karts, monster trucks, funny cars and a massive truck. Now this is an option you don't often find in games, unless you buy them all separately.

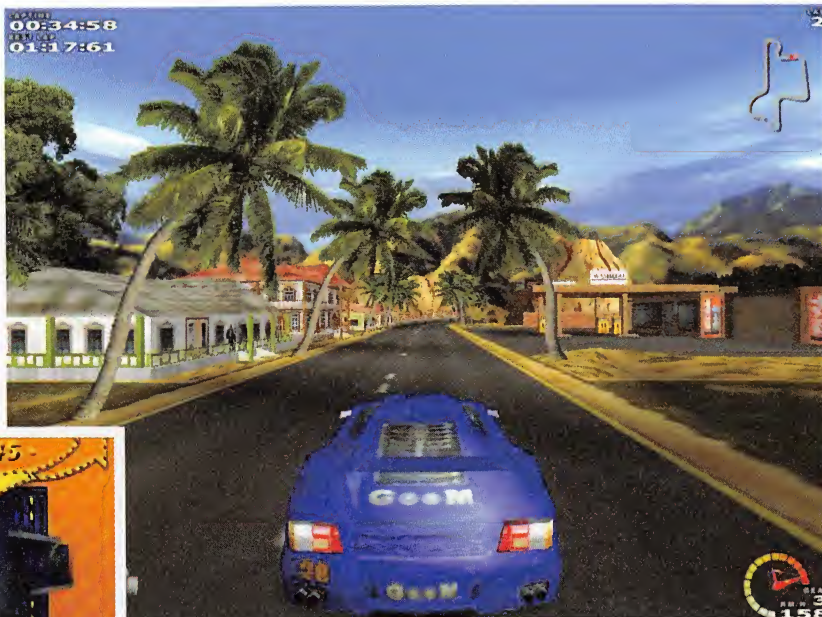
Move it man!

The graphics on some of these cars are superb. Even the dashboard is fully detailed, though there's no in-car view. The only views you have are out side the car, bonnet view and bumper cam, but when your car spins and you get the camera panning around the car you can clearly see the detail that has gone into this game. One thing missing is the vehicle damage detail. It also would have been nice if the driver moved his arms whilst driving.



It's the little details that make all the difference.

Now this might sound strange, but the realism of the graphics in Breakneck are quite scary. On one track, where you're racing through fog, you could swear you are actually there feeling the cold... or did



(left) Argh! It's the pre-race menu! Breakneck has arguably the worst menu interface ever seen. Only the brave ever return from its labyrinthine chambers.

someone leave the window open again? From driving in Arizona, Egypt, Germany to the detail on the racetracks, the images and scenery are inspiring. Not much has been left out of this game, except you can only use the weapons during the "shootout"

racing game, and a cop car would be fun... at least you still get a siren to play with.

Mighty fine weapons

Damn the opponents are good. Even when you reduce their skill level they still seem to



Aha! We've cracked it. Avoid the racing game screenshot curse by taking the grab mere seconds into the race.

be hard to catch up with. When you play the shootout race you get a selection of some mighty fine weapons, like a gatling gun,

grenades, land mines, homing missiles, plus the coolest weapon the Bungee. Bungee lets you freeze the car in front instantly, which comes in handy near the finish line.

Standard vs. Arcade

There are two versions of game play on Breakneck. The first is the standard where you select your game play and cars etc. but to get to each track you must first win the race to proceed. The down side to playing this is the interface is really hard to work with as the selections are almost the same colour and to get from one screen to the next is a task of its own. For a quick straight to the point play, select arcade. This is as simple as your choice selection

can get plus you get access to all the tracks and a similar game play as the standard.

Whether you drive in the rain or at night the thrill eventually wears down after a while, remember stop, revive, survive. Breakneck is a game that won't sit on your shelf too long collecting dust, as it just makes you want to go back to play more and more, regardless of the game play.

John Dominic



86%

For

Realistic driving, nice graphics and superb scenery.

Against

Engine sounds are a bit tacky, lack of different driving views.

Need

Windows 95/98 P233, 32Mb RAM, 8x CD, 3Dfx card

Want

P300, 64Mb RAM, 3Dfx Card with at least 16Mb on board

3D SUPPORT

3dfx

Eastern Front II

Genre: Turn based Strategy | Players: 1-16 | Publisher: Jack of all Games | Price: \$TBA | Rating: TBA | Available: Now

War games. War and games. There's some freaky universal linkage going down here...

Many Turn Based Strategy gamers have long craved an historically accurate game that offers more than the standard automated board game fare. Salvation is at hand, for Eastern Front II very much fits the bill. Boasting a dynamic and static campaign each for the Allied and Axis sides, and 150 individual scenarios, Eastern Front II offers unprecedented value for money. With the addition of the random scenario editor, an incredible scenario editor and the capacity for up to 16 person multiplayer matches, the game's long term potential borders on limitless.

Assault barges

The game is set during the period of World War II in which the Axis forces commenced their invasion of Russia. In addition to being able to assume the role of either a German or Russian commander, the player is able to command Croat, Spanish, Finnish, Romanian or Hungarian forces. Historically, the Axis powers enjoyed significant armour diversity and this is faithfully mirrored in the game. German Panther F and Panther 2 tanks form the bulk of the

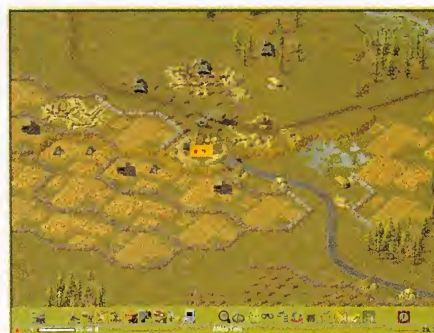


Axis' armour divisions, with halftracks and various artillery weapons providing short range and extended range assault capabilities respectively. The Allies also deploy a wide variety of armour, with Russian T-44's the mainstay of the armoured divisions deployed throughout the region. Amphibious support from landing boats and barges is also available. Infantry also plays a major role in the conflicts, with both sides fielding large numbers of rifle, machine gun and mortar personnel as well as elite ski troops.

Eastern Front II's AI is exemplary. Both factions follow standard tactical doctrine, but constantly alter their strategies, making them both equally formidable oppo-

WWII was actually triggered by a road rage incident when Jurgen's Panther tank was found blocking the Berlin-Moscow highway

nents. The end result is fearsome, protracted battles that often decimate the player's forces, or leave them in tatters. While initially intimidating, the AI's seeming infallibility provides the type of challenge that makes victory very sweet indeed.





Lumbering tanks

The game breaks with tradition and offers a visually pleasing battlefield. Maps are constructed from contoured hexagonal tiles that accurately portray elevation and various terrain types including alpine and temperate regions. All maps are liberally sprinkled

with farms, streams and fields that have a very real effect on tactical situations. The combat units are equally easy on the eyes and feature multiple crew animations and rotating gun turrets. Aurally, Eastern Front II is something of a mixed bag. While the sounds of tanks lumbering over the terrain

sound suitably meaty, the fact that the same effect is used for all tracked vehicles on both sides creates an unwelcome feeling of repetition every time such units move. There is also a conspicuous absence of infantry sound effects, save for the ubiquitous crunch of combat boots on gravel when they're on the move.

Ammo dumping

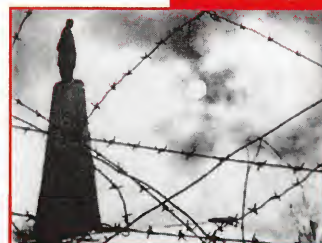
The designers also made some rather annoying decisions in designing the game. For example, each scenario takes approximately 1-2 hours to complete and this simulates an identical number of hours of game world combat. Unfortunately the player is limited to saving games between campaigns. While this was obviously intended to prevent 'cheating' by players who like to constantly reload saved games, not everyone has the time to play through an entire scenario in one sitting. Supply rules also inconvenience the player by restricting movement to relatively short ranges. In a battle that is supposed to last only 1-2 game world hours, running out of ammunition several minutes into a scenario seems less than plausible.

In spite of the aforementioned idiosyncrasies, Eastern Front II's solid gameplay and insane long term value takes it to the head of the Turn Based Strategy class. Highly recommended to anyone looking for a comprehensive and enjoyable strategy title that stays true to its board game roots.

Brett Robinson

Nazis freezing their arses off in the Russian winter; now that's what we call gameplay...

PLUS⁺



<http://infoukes.com/history/ww2>

World War II in the Ukraine. Interesting information on the Ukranian involvement in the conflict

85%

■ For

Addictive gameplay, historical accuracy and unparalleled long term value.

■ Against

Some annoying aspects like a console-esque save feature and unrealistic supply rules. Audio could also use improvement.

■ Need

P133, 16MB RAM, 4X CDROM

■ Want

P233, 32MB RAM, 10X CDROM

3D SUPPORT

None

Thrust, Twist & Turn

Genre: Arcade Racing | Players: 1 | Developer: CARTS Entertainment | Publisher: Take 2 | Price: \$TBA | Rating: G | Available: Now

Thrust, Twist + Turn... And curse, cry and complain.

The first drama for this game was trying to install the damn thing. Two hours later, an installation on several machines (of course this game wouldn't run on the fastest machine either), and after installing its own version of INDEO 5.0 drivers, it actually worked.

Woo! Title screen!

After many hassles the main screen popped up without the game crashing after the intro video. There isn't much choice to this game: you pick what kind of race you want, select the type of track, what type of track, (three plus hidden) and select your car, of which you only get an option of four to choose from, but, look pretty groovy.

The moment has arrived, you're at the starting line in your funny looking 'Sumthing'

(the beginners car in order to get a feel for the game), revving the hell out of that little machine and then... zoom you're off. Next thing you know, that little Sumthing is going a zillion miles an hour and sliding into the first turn. Thrust, Twist + Turn does have some nice smooth textures, the effects are nice and clean and with a bit more realism than most games. TTT also has an interesting, but typical, sound-track that eventually makes you want to turn the volume off and listen to Slayer.



Simpleness

Unfortunately, TTT wasn't very entertaining and within 10 minutes of playing it was time for breakfast. For some strange reason (my excuse is this review) you will find yourself playing TTT again. Revving up another car to go off sliding, bumping and ramming into the corners at blazing speed. The thing that's a little tricky at first is hitting those loops at such a speed that it tends to get a little touchy and the slightest movement can get you off the loop - especially when there is another car beside you. One of the things missing from TTT is the lack of awesome power-ups to make things a bigger blast and give it a more interesting game play.

Where's my Coke and choccy?

If you're looking for a good buzz, TTT is a fairly simple and straightforward kind of game. Race around futuristic and modern environments, with minutes of entertainment. TTT reminds me of a beefed up race game from a few years back that you received as a demo with other games. It

PLUS+



(left) The curse of the racing game screenshot strikes again, with our hapless reviewer in last place

also has the makings that look and feel like a console game. If you had a Sony Playstation, it's a game you'd probably buy. After all the jumping and whooping banked curves it was time to move on and give in. TTT is a definite for the new car racing sim fan or your younger sibling. This is as simple as it gets.

John Dominic

30%

For

Nice simple game play, graphics are better than the average futuristic car games.

Against

After a while it gets boring on a PC, especially when you consider what other car games are available. Should have a wider selection of tracks to begin with and should be able to buy car parts and be able to modify your car.

Need

Windows 95/98 P233, 32Mb RAM, 4x CD, Indeo 5.0

Want

(refund, beer and pizza) P300 64Mb RAM, 3Dfx

3D SUPPORT

3dfx



Boss Rally

Genre: Arcade Racing | Players: 1-Multi (LAN, Modem/serial) | Publisher: Southpeak Interactive | Price: \$TBA | Rating: G | Available: Now

Cheap port of a crummy Nintendo rally game turns out, er, badly...

Boss Rally is a straight-from-console conversion of a Nintendo 64 game called Top Gear Rally. This mediocre attempt at a driving game might have seemed exciting for pathetic console-owning characters, but any self-respecting PC gamer will scoff at it after a mere ten seconds of observation. I recall console owners I knew playing it against each other on weekends, and being baffled at why they just couldn't seem to get the hang of it. Here's the short story: the game doesn't make sense. The sad truth is that 90% of console gamers will never come within 50 metres of a decent motorsport simulation, the infinitely superior calibre of game we lucky PC owners can indulge in at the slightest whim. The closest they will come will be something like arcade Sega Rally, which is not bad, but in no way is it a pillar of outstanding simulation.

You'd never know it...

There is not one four-wheeled vehicle in our known modern universe that is as utterly incapable of driving in a straight line as the vehicles in this game. You're on a dry, flat, straight road with hard suspension and "grippy" (sigh) tyres. You flatten the accelerator and speed along the road. Okay so far. Then you make a minor, subtle, twitchy adjustment to better place yourself for the upcoming bend and the car slides, at a uniform speed, still facing forwards, toward the edge

of the road. Somehow you have instantly accumulated enough momentum to skid so hard sideways that you cannot correct your course without a dramatic, dangerous movement. On a straight, dry, sealed road with "grippy" tyres. And hard suspension. What a ceramic container of excrement.

But Ed really hates...

The problems seems to rise from the design idea that the car is at all times sliding in some errant direction. You can never seem to "shave off" that residual skidding motion called lateral



No, it's not the curse of the racing game screenshot striking again. It's just and ugly, dull game

physics we've ever seen. Simply slinging it across to PC format with no perceptible improvements beyond high resolution has resulted in a shamelessly unimaginative, crap excuse for a game. It's not up to scratch graphically, either. The likes of Colin McRae Rally freely defecate over the whole exterior of flimsy, uninspired games such as this.

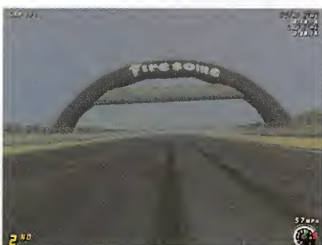
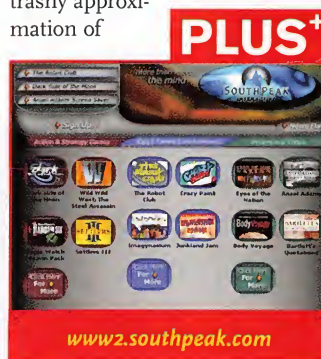
Ed Dawson

momentum. Not even tiny amounts, which in reality are negated by friction with the road surface, provided by the, er, tyres. What is known as Throttle-Steering, where you use short bursts of speed to regain traction while cornering or skidding, is unheard of here. There simply isn't enough depth to the simulation. This driving theory stuff works in any simulated world with a decent interpretation of Mr Newton's laws, yet to get good at this game you have to ignore all forms of driving theory, and instead get in tune with

the bent fictional characteristics of this trite little universe. It's true that sometimes pedantic simulation is not the most fun thing to experience, but when things stop behaving like they're under the influence of gravity, you have to draw the line.

Console racing games...

Overall, it's a typical, predictable, short game with not enough tracks and the most trashy approximation of



5%

■ For

Has a very fast and responsive menu system between levels. The mouse cursor is a cute little Makita drill.

■ Against

An overall idiotic ignorance of the importance of gameplay makes this an utterly annoying game. Even the Nintendo punks didn't like it. Why would we?

■ Need

P233, 32 MB RAM, 8x CD-ROM, 60 MB HD space, Glide or Direct 3D compatible accelerator card.

■ Want

A Nintendo 64?

3D SUPPORT

Glide & Direct 3D

Retroversion

Look! New bit! We embrace change but aren't afraid of the past. Each month we'll look back at a recent, but not too old, game and bask in the beauty and depth which is only revealed by many months of hard playing.

Grand Prix Legends

"I am an artist; the track is my canvas, and the car is my brush."
Graham Hill

If you want realism in a car simulation, buy Grand Prix Legends. Next, invite a few friends over with some baseball bats, a bit of petrol and a box of matches. Then proceed to do some laps in the car with headphones on at ear bleeding level. When you inevitably crash, get them to start bashing you about with the bats followed by fire all around you.

Well I'm not about to go that far, but for a true race simulation this game is extremely hard to surpass. It is for that simple reason, to many a Grand Prix Legends fan, that this game is the only one to play when it comes to driving a racecar on your computer.

A time of heroes

How could a game become a classic in such a short time? Well with the name it has, it was on the right track (no pun intended) from the very beginning. Most media we hear about the early sixties and its racers or cars, glorifies the sport and its heroes, with stories of unmatched courage and skills beyond the normal human boundaries.

Proper online racing

One area that Grand Prix Legends seems to shine very well in is its ability for multiplayer

over the Internet. With such additions as GPL Spy Boy, a third party Internet ping tool, where you can find racers from all over the world, competing in rounds of their own world championships, or just joining in for a



few quick laps. As most of us know, any game these days that doesn't have the multiplayer ability is going to find it harder than most to really hold up its weight for long term game play.

The physics can be a bit too daunting to some - even to the point where many buyers of GPL

wanted to take it back to the shops. With complete uncontrollability a factor, when you first start to learn how to drive it is in no way an arcade game. In the words of James Pickard, a notable GPL driver "it is an absolute RACING SIMULATOR.. not really a GAME..."

Tyreless game

Skill is required and patience is needed to master the game and believe me, there are some true masters out there. To complement the physics engine, options abound in the car setup area. With a myriad of setups available to you via the garage before racing. There are whole pages on the net dedicated to

REVIEWED: Issue 30

SCORED: 95%

WHAT WE SAID THEN: Almost insanely hard! Good thing, too, because you'll want to be playing this for at least the next several years. Peerless racing feel and without doubt the best engine noise ever heard emitted from a computer speaker. And, perversely, since it's based on the 1967 season, it will never feel out of date!





setups alone. You truly know you are on the edge while you drive around on those skinny tyres that you have!

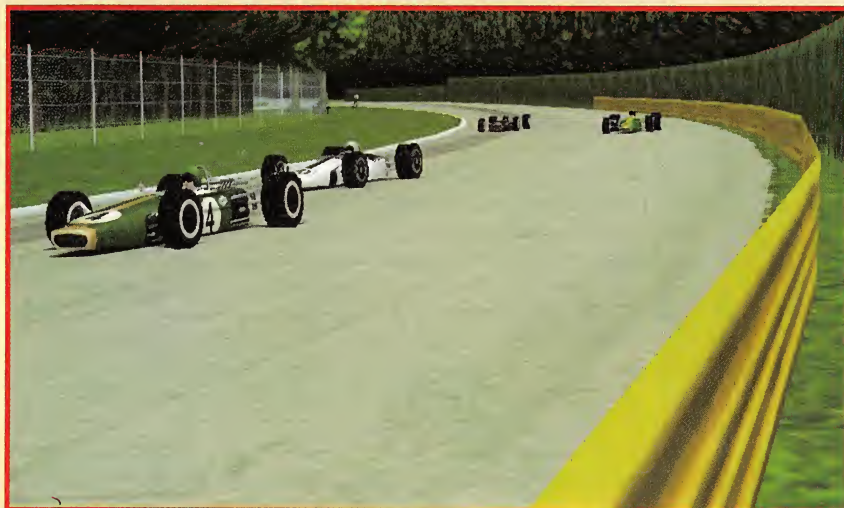
I don't know about you, but personally I don't mind a thumping big burnout. If you should choose to light up the above-mentioned razorblades, the sound is a pleasure to the motor

sim fan. Your eardrums will resonate to the beast mounted behind you and if you have a sub woofer setup, your whole body becomes a part of the action as you can feel the vibrations shooting through the body. It's a small form of virtual reality in a sense, as not only do you see the game but also you feel it as well.

Global Hype System

A quite ingenious system is used for the AI. Technically Papyrus call it the 'Global Hype System', some of its features are a database that stores your best 10 lap times and the AI then uses this as a reference in future races to make things as competitive as possible. Also,

the damage model in this game is the best around. Car handling will be affected from all aspects from tyre wear to gentle brushes against a wall. One notable flaw though is the fact that pit stops in the races are not up to the standard of the rest of the game. Really just limiting you to black flag stops.



PLUS⁺



GPL links:

For more information about the Grand Prix Legends you really just can't go past The Fast Lane, at www.grandprix2.com/gpl/. This is where everything and anything that has been written about GPL can be found.



Some factual reporting can also be found at www2.eis.net.au/~bramwell/welcome.htm. A web page dedicated to Jim Clarke who is one of the toughest racers in the game.



Also GPL Spy Boy is available at gpl.gamestats.com/gsb/. So get out your wheel, strap on the helmet and join a race!

To sum I would just like to add a quote from Jim Clarke, who died tragically in a Formula 2 race and is a true legend "But in a way, fear is a big part of racing, because if there was nothing to be frightened of, and no limit, any fool could get into a motor car and racing would not exist as a sport." I wonder if Jim ever in his wildest dreams could have imagined what we are up to now?

Ah look at the pretty pictures. I think the screenshots you can see splattered over the pages around this article speak for themselves and I really could go into detail about the graphics but I think I'll just let art run its course.

Phill Bennett
Australian Sim Racer
<http://racers.qgl.org>

WEB STUDIO

So you want to make a webpage?

Developer: Sierra Home

No so long ago, producing a website required an understanding of HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) that was inaccessible to most, if not all home computer users. While there were text editors available to assist in the correction and formatting of HTML code (BBEdit and Homesite) it wasn't until the introduction of WYSISYG (What You See Is What You Get) applications such as CyberStudio, Dreamweaver, Frontpage or Pagemill that Web Page authoring came to resemble something more like standard word processing.

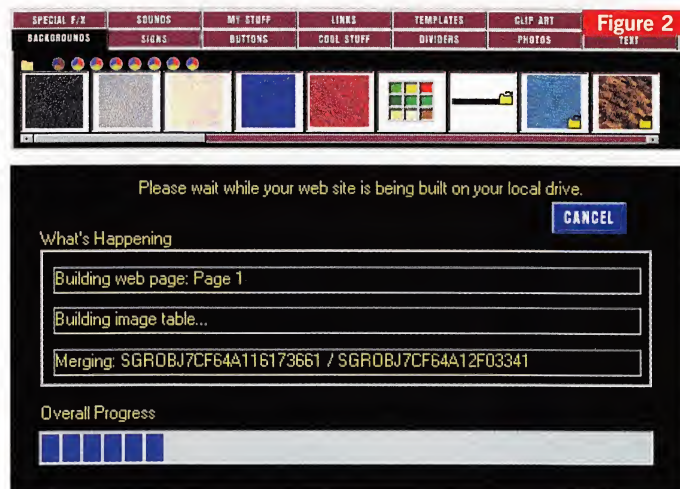
These new programs worked by "hiding" the HTML code from the user behind the applications GUI (graphic user Interface). If you want to place an image in a document, for example, you can select from a menu the relevant command and the program will create for you the necessary HTML. In short, these new programs now enable beginners to work in a visual environment where there was little, if any, exposure to HTML. And as a consequence, these new applications initiated a veritable explosion of new content of the net, as inexperienced users started producing their own web sites on a multitude of different subject matters from gardening



to particle physics. And to put it bluntly, WYSISYG became the standard catch call for software developers seeking to penetrate the lucrative home user market.

So what is HTML and do I really need to learn it?

In simplest terms, HTML is the programming language that resides behind all web pages. It is the common code that browsers interpret to reconstruct

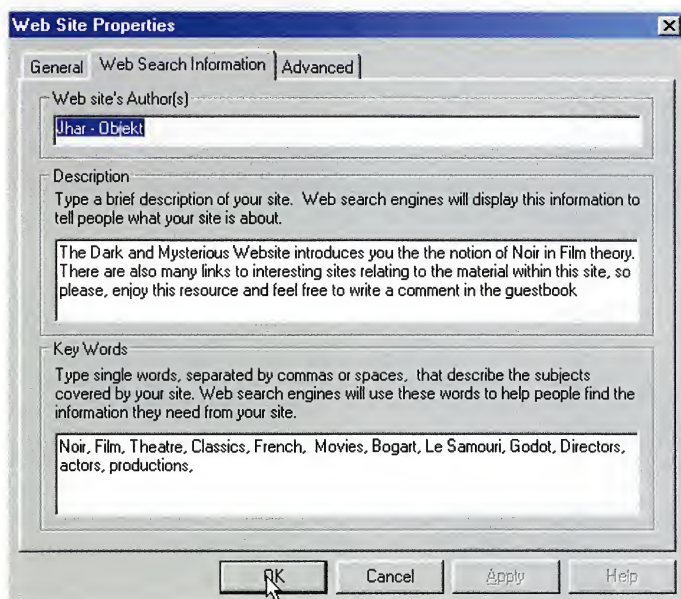


a web page as close as possible to the way the original author intended. So that said, HTML is basically a structural language that tells a browser where things are positioned on a page.

If you have never seen HTML then launch your browser and go to >View> Page Source - Pretty isn't it! Now to answer the second part of this question (and this should reassure many of you out there), the straight answer is no - you do not need to understand HTML. However, as with any kind of knowledge comes empowerment, and having an

understanding of the code that makes a site function definitely gives you an advantage in site construction (not to mention its geek value).

The thing is... most people out there would prefer to have in their possession a universal translator in their top pocket, rather than having to learn the languages that would otherwise render them ignorant. This is where the WYSISYG applications kick in and today Web Studio (Figure 1) comes into the picture. A universal translator of code if you will, whose job it is to



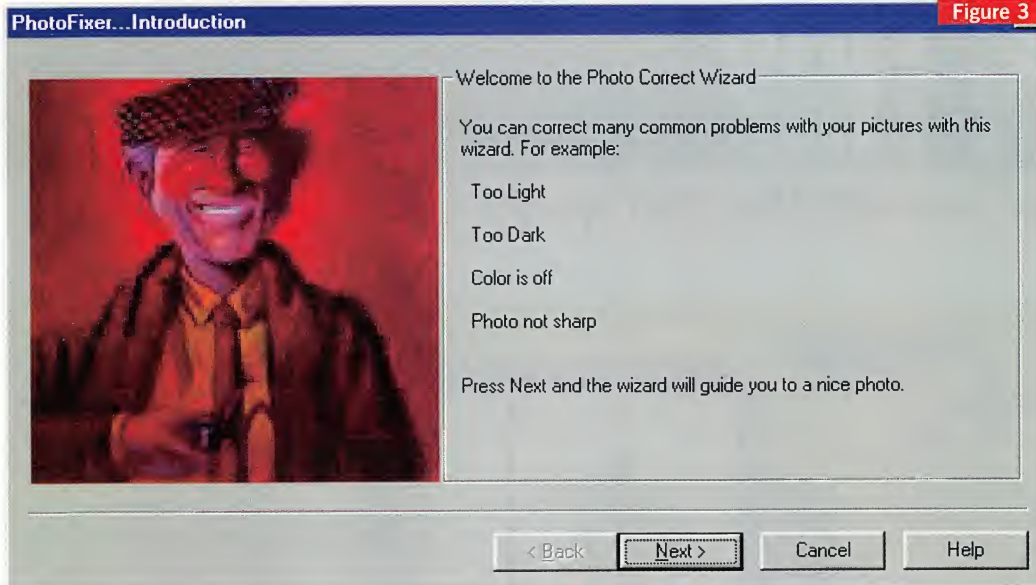
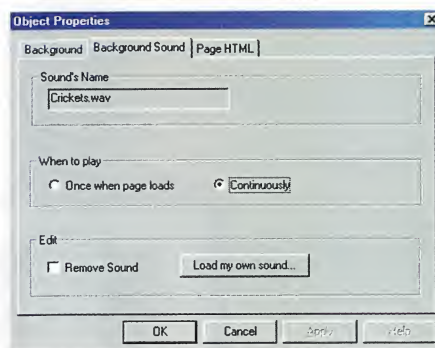


Figure 3

excluded without any real reason it seems, other than to convince users they don't need to see HTML at all. The other major problem with this package is that you cannot open existing web pages in Web Studio - they have to be created in and saved on your hard drive in a proprietary Web Studio format - gr!



Figure 4



Recommendations

So you love the sound of this drag n' drop stuff eh? Sure it makes building a page a sinch and for many people its going to do just that - make a quick and easy web site. I get a lot of ICQ questions of people asking me which editor they should use, or which is

the easiest to get started on. After looking at this package, I'd have to conclude that Web Studio really one of the easiest programs on the market for beginners, but the catch is it offers no learning curve.

If you want to get started on web publishing with the option to learn more along the way about HTML and Javascript for example, I would not recommend Web Studio as it simply doesn't expose you to any of the 'real' aspects of web authoring. But then on the other hand, if you only intention is to create a little site you can point to you're friends without being bothered by all of these complexities then Web Studio is perfect for you. Overall, it makes recommending a ultra-simplistic web production tool very easy indeed, but a Dreamweaver or Go Live it ain't.

Jhar

hide from its user, any nasty and unintelligible languages that so proliferate web construction.

Hurray: Drag n' Drop

Web Studio does have quite an intuitive interface that guides the beginner through all of the common elements found in web sites. These elements (backgrounds, dividers, signs, photos etc) are represented by a buttons board at the top of the screen (See Figure 2). To add a background for example, the user simply selects from the category and drags the desired background onto the page - presto, it's there! Users can also opt to load their own graphics into the "My Stuff" category and these can be placed on the document in the same way as the CDROM clip art. Whenever something more complex strikes you, such as creating links or adding e-mail information, a wizard pops up to assist you.

Other Features

Probably one of the most difficult aspects of creating a web-site is getting all of the necessary graphics to look right. Sierra has

included in Web Studio a simple image editing suite that works in a drag n' drop manner as well. You simply select the effect, (lighten, darken, drop shadow etc) and drop it onto the image. What can assist be simpler than that!

In fact, with Web Studio you don't even need to worry about what format you originally created the graphics in - it will convert them for you! Also included is an image correction wizard that can assist in balancing your graphics contrast, sharpness etc. (Figure 3) Quite useful, if your ambition isn't quite set on mastering programs like Photoshop. Also includes are a bunch of ready made javascript applications that you can add to your page such as scrolling text, java clocks, search engines to name a just a few. You can also add sound to your pages in the form of MIDI (Music Instrument Digital Interface) or .wav files. For this, you can select from the readymade sounds or load your own and drop them onto the page. In short, Web Studio covers most of the common elements plus a few extra goodies as well.

Publishing

In the bygone days, web publishing was something of a geek's pastime. After creating the HTML document in simple text, authors would FTP into the server and upload the code for everyone to see. Later on they could telnet into the server to make changes to this document, or perhaps add an image or two.

This process has been much simplified in the later WYSIWYG programs that have included simple FTP wizards that require only a few server details and kapow, you site is online. Web Studio has one such function called "Save Web Site to Internet..."(figure 4). Cute and useful provided you don't have any problems that is... If you do have problems, then you're gonna just have to jump on your ISP's helpline queue for a few hours until you can get the right information.

Following this, Web Studio has one really strange quirk that makes it different from most other web authoring programs, that is - you can't save your documents in HTML! WHAT? No HTML? Yes, shop as you heard it right! Web Studio really wants to hide that code from you, for better or for worst. Personally, I found this very frustrating and it's something that Sierra has

PLUS⁺

Recommended Links:
For more information on Web Studio visit
www.Sierrahome.com
And if you want to read an article on the top WYSIWYG editors visit
www.webmonkey.com

FASHION TRIP

Ever play 'dress ups' as a kid? Miss that special thrill it gave you?

Developer: Sierra/ iStyle

'Oh Mandy, It's so hard for me to find the time in my busy schedule to go out for some hard core retail therapy. Parking is always a bitch, and those stupid "sell, sell, sell" sales assistants don't leave you alone until you buy something.'

'I know what you mean Cindy. Getting from store to store is so hard, and having to get into those cubicles and try on the entire store until you find something that fits and looks good is more trouble than it's worth.'

'Oh my god! Is that Heather? She looks amazing! She's got a new outfit and it looks so LA. Heather, how did you find the time to completely coordinate a new wardrobe?'

'Fashion Trip Daaaarlings! You should try it some time.'

'Wow, sounds expensive. Where did you start, did you have a personal shopper and dresser?'

'Don't be fools girls, I did it all on my computer. Haven't you seen clueless? Here, take it home with you.'

'Oh, fashion Trip, the virtual mall! This has everything!'

'All my fave designers, and many I've only ever heard of from American sit-coms and films. They've even got Seventeen!!'

'What's Seventeen?'

'Oh, it's like Dolly, but much cooler cause it's from the states.'

'Too Cool!'

Better than you know what

If this sounds like you, or you know someone named Tiffany, you need Fashion Trip. This program almost has it all: a virtual mall, dressing room, and helpful tips of how not to look like a raccoon whilst applying eyeliner. It



This is it, kids - rock bottom! Sad huh?

You'll also find great information on fashion, like the origins or the sewing machine and how Donna Karen got started.

Fashion Trip is also full of great advice. Having a fashion crisis? Fashion trip can help. Want to know more about the Sketchers zinch platform sneakers? Fashion Trip can help. Don't know how to apply make up? Fashion Trip can help. Need your own personal style? Yes, Fashion Trip can definitely help.

You go girl!

Basically, if you follow this program to the letter you could become a well-adjusted, middle class, trendy, aesthetically pleasing, personality void, all-American as apple pie teenage girl; straight out of the cookie cutter. You might even make the cheerleading squad.

Agata Budinska

also shows you how you can buy all your favourite articles over the Internet. Shop around the virtual mall and pick out the stuff that you like. Take it into the dressing room and mix and match

your favourite outfits on the size 6 headless mannequin (except shoes, accessories and make up, and oh, two tops at the same time, you know, stuff like that). You can then get some expert advice on your creation, or just double click on the item to learn more about it and get immediately linked to its home page. It even has FIDM, the Fashion institute of Design and Merchandise (true), which have a whole store dedicated to fashion through the ages.



MORPH v2.5

Mighty Morphin' PC PowerPlay Readers

Developer: Sierra

Ever wanted to know what the children of Marilyn Manson and Celine Dion would look like? Ever thought that Richard Nixon's nose should have been a few inches longer? Ever wondered if your neighbour is wearing frilly knickers under their Armani suit? Did you answer yes to any of these? If so, Morph will provide hours of endless entertainment for you and your friends. In its latest version, Morph gives you more of the same but with a bunch of new features, better image quality and a much friendlier interface. So what does Morph do?

Conceptually stimulating

Basically with Morph you can stretch, bend and discolour an image until it becomes another. Morph also makes it easy to do, with its simple 3 step plan:

- 1) Load in a start and end image
- 2) Mark keypoints and lines on images and adjust to fit (key-points are the bits you want to match, like eyes and noses)
- 3) Hit the morph key

Morph also contains warping and caricature features, so you can truly distort any image. For once, the manual that comes with is both easy to follow and

very helpful, guiding you through different processes and helping you iron out any wrinkles. The tutorials take you through basic morphing and warping, through to advanced stuff and special effects. It can even show you how to make the Mona Lisa wink.

Technically sound

The program morphs images frame by frame, usually in groups of around 75 frames. By joining up key points like hair-lines, necks, shoulders eyes and so on, you can get a smooth tran-

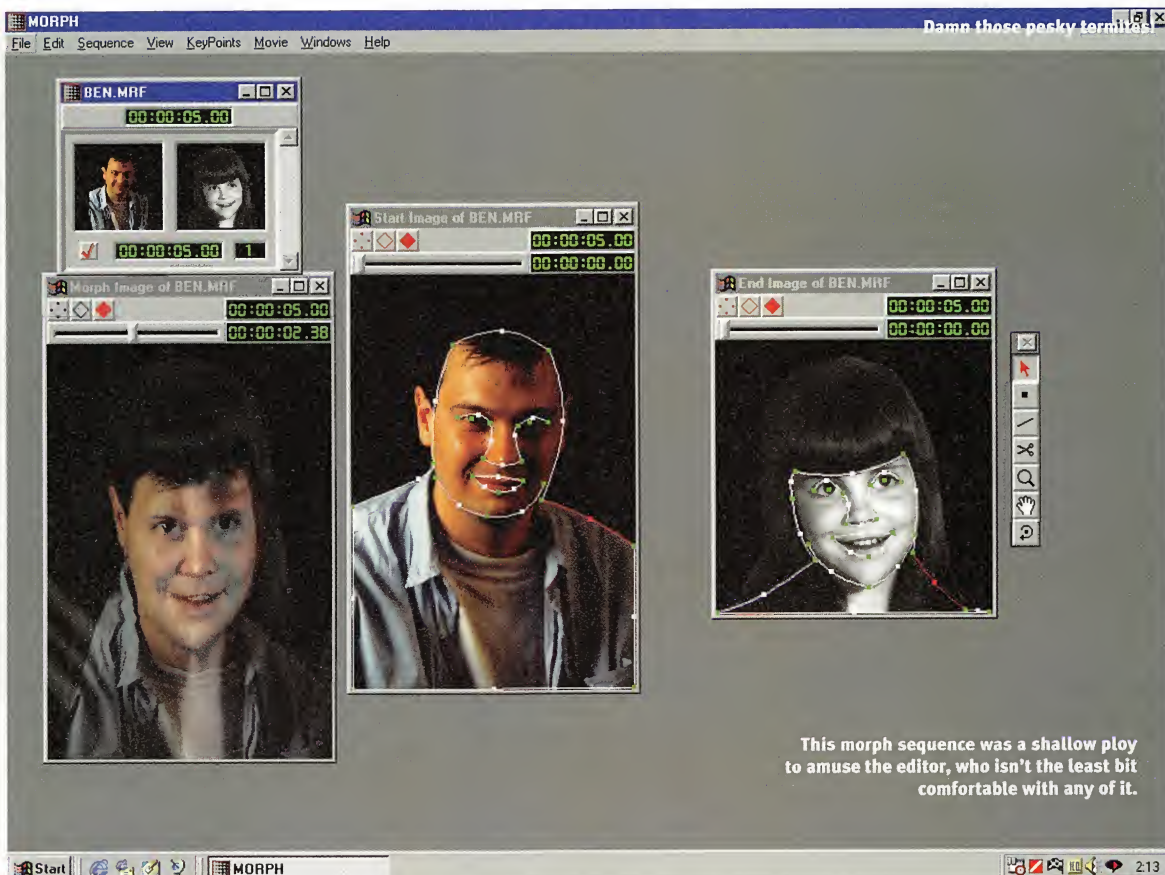
sition of almost anything. The morphing can be saved in a single movement as a movie sequence (avi), or individually at any point in the morph as a still frame. Just chose any point by either time or frames elapsed and the image will come up of what's happening there. For instance, you could morph a monkey into a fish, then save the middle image and send it to the Weekly World News as the new mutant hairy fish living in a pond just outside of Chernobl. In fact, most simple special effects can be achieved with

Morph's help, leading to hours of endless (and at times mindless) fun.

Flexible

You don't have to start and stop with pictures either - you can also morph avi sequences. The program has quite a large field for flexibility, letting you control the end product. All in all a tidy little number. Easy to use, and of course, a lot of fun. The family photo album will never be safe again.....

Agata J Budinska



This morph sequence was a shallow ploy to amuse the editor, who isn't the least bit comfortable with any of it.



ORACLE

Like an unshakeable beacon in a sea of conundrums...

Write to the Oracle at:

Oracle

PC PowerPlay

78 Renwick st

Redfern

NSW 2016

oracle@pcpowerplay.next.com.au

Populous: The Beginning

? I am really badly stuck in Populous: The Beginning on mission 15 where your shaman is stuck in that damn "magical" prison. So if you could tell me some cheats for the game, like level skip or freeze timer or something, that'd be most helpful.

Ben Hanley

Qld

***** While I never condone the despicable use of cheats in any game, I am struck by a particularly frightening premonition in which you are trapped forever in the hell of mission 15. Thus, I shall make an exception in this instance - but only in this instance! Hold **TAB-F11** to enter the chat screen, then type **"BYRNE"** to access the cheat mode.

Now you can hit:

Tab-F3 for all spells

Tab-F4 for all buildings

Tab-F5 for full mana

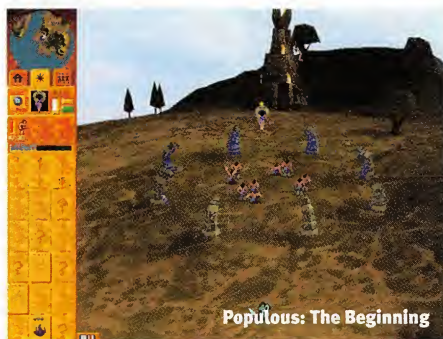
Half-Life

? Oh, wise Oracle, may you liberate my mind from this torment. I have just relieved the Gluon Gun from the meek scientist who couldn't possess the strength to lift the thing and I am completely screwed as to how the secondary function should be used and what it does. Please answer my queries and may you receive much Coke and fresh underwear for your toils.

Gregory Fahey

Email

***** It is fortunate, Gregory, that you find me in such good humour, for the obviousness of your request is an insult to my boundless wisdom. The secondary function is merely a toggle to allow you to switch between the two modes at which the weapon performs. Experiment and it will come to you in time.



Broken Sword

? Because of my love of adventure games, I have to ask you a few questions. My first is for Broken Sword. I'm stuck at Montfaucon in Paris. Every time I try to open the sewer cover the crusty old police bastard stops me!

Stephen Chan/Smith

Email

***** Tsk. Do you really need an audience for such grubby acts? First, you should chat with the juggler then attempt to juggle yourself. Talk to the policeman, specifically asking about himself, and show him the clown nose you've been carrying. Now, talk to the juggler again and make another hapless juggling effort. The crowd should clear and you'll be free to descend to the excremental depths at your leisure.

Silver

? I just got Silver (a cool game) and I am now stuck at that fire thingy boss. It comes up in 5 or 6 different places, you know, the place just after the mayor and the scorched armor. Any tips?

Xothermic

Email

***** When you gaze upon the world from on high, as I do, you are privileged to view the harmonious balance of nature. Each of the four elements (earth, air, fire, water) that constitute your domain must be subdued by its opposite. Pleasingly, Silver accords to this governance - you shouldn't fight fire with fire, but with ice. Oh, and use

the rock in the centre of the room to shield your party from the demon's flame.

Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee

? I'm presently stuck in Scrabania Nests. At one point you have to roll under a gap with a scrab chasing you. To roll you have to stop, press down and then roll, but if you stop the scrab kills you. Could you please help me with this.

Syldrew

Forest Hill, VIC

***** Oh, your limited mortal ways amuse me greatly. The words I am about to utter will shatter the illusions you have built to describe your world. Readjustment may take some time, but there's no need to be afraid. You do not need to stop in order to perform a roll. A skilled Mudokon can roll while in the very process of sprinting. Practice this and that scrab will haunt you no more.

Heroes of Might & Magic 3

? What a fabulous game and brain activator it is, but I am stuck! I cannot get past the second campaign game in the Good perspective. There does not seem to be a way I can acquire Archangels, even though I meet all the necessary requirements.

Grumpygramps

Gooseberry Hill, WA

***** In all the campaigns, a large army can be amassed in the early stages simply by getting the monsters you encounter to join you for greater glory. To increase the



chances of this, make sure your hero has good morale and outnumbers the enemy. Unless you're rolling in gold, then don't bother upgrading any of the troop dwellings except for the Archer's Tower (Marksmen provide the best value for money upgrade, thanks to their double shot attack). Finally, regarding the Archangels, some towns just cannot build certain structures no matter how many resources you possess. This is a predefined parameter for the map, so not even the great Oracle could change it.

Earthworm Jim

[?] I have just started playing Earthworm Jim and I am stuck on level "What the heck". I am having trouble getting past the snowmen. Shooting hardly ever helps and whipping just stops the fire balls. Is there any other way of killing them?

Diana Gudel
Morrangup, WA

[*] Sometimes discretion truly is the better part of valour. Would you prefer to not fight the snowman at all? I thought as much. Once you've killed the first Lawyer, instead of opening the gate to the warp gem and the snowman you should stand in front of the wheel (the one that opens the gate) and face right. Now duck and hold down the whip button. This allows you to bypass the snowman entirely.

Sanitarium

[?] I am stuck in Sanitarium. I am up to the level called The Hive. I can't figure out how to get out of the puzzle which involves five grubs that give out a faint noise when I press them. I can't figure out how to find out the combination for this puzzle.

Sunny Nagpal
Granville, NSW



[*] Listen to the children, my child, for they are the voice of the future. You need to match what they sing to the noise of the "grubs". You may need to turn the volume up considerably, if all you're hearing is a faint noise.

Quest For Glory V

[?] I'm playing Quest For Glory V as a fighter and I'm up to the Rite of Destiny. I have gotten all the components for the Balloon and put them together with the Gondola, but I can't find a brazier to create the heat and make the balloon rise so as to fly to Delos.

M Suffredini
Seymour, VIC

[*] A picture's worth a thousand words, my friend, or so I'm told. To be honest, I'm waiting for the film version. But, anyway. Buy the picture of a balloon from Wolfie and show it to Marrak. He'll then sell you a brazier.

Quest for Glory V

[?] I am currently having trouble in Quest for Glory 5: Dragon Fire with one of the rites of rulership. It's the one where you have to go over to the island which the Hydra inhabits. Well, I can't get over there to even try and kill this thing.

Frank Stewart
Email

[*] Man was never meant to fly, but that has rarely stopped him from making a complete fool of himself in trying. Visit the Famous Adventurer and ask him about the Hydra. Also, take a moment by the stairs to read up on how man once made wings out of wax and feathers. This should nudge you in the right direction.

The Neverhood

[?] My friend has The Neverhood and he can't find the last key. I think it has something to do with the last disk, but we can't get it. Please help me.

Daniel Pfeiffer
Moree, NSW

[*] Oh dear, Daniel, you must really enjoy torturing yourself. Sigh. Yes, you do need the last disk, but where is it to be found? Remember the painfully long Hall of

Records? Well, you're going to have to walk all the way to the end, pick up the final disk from the floor, then walk all the way back again. And, you know what, I'm going to love every moment of watching you do it.

Broken Sword 2: The Smoking Mirror

[?] Can you please help me with Broken Sword 2? I am stuck and I can only go to three places - the cafe, Oubier's house and the gallery. How am I going to save the world if I can't go anywhere else? I am only thirteen years old.

Michele and Mandy
Wainuiomata, NZ

[*] The Smoking Mirror is not a real-time adventure, thus the world can still be saved no matter how long you take. Armed with the exotic pot you found in Oubier's house, head to the gallery and talk with the fat man. Once you've asked him about Oubier and what he drinks, show him the pot. Now go to the rear of the room and look at the crates. Return and talk to the man, exhausting the dialogue options. To distract him so you can get a closer look at the crates, spike his drink twice with the flask you swiped from the man at the cafe. I am only thirteen billion years old.



TIPS & TACTICS

Winning without the work

Baldur's Gate

★ Keep your game speed around 40 and avoid the maximum speed since it makes responsiveness to the monsters and NPCs in battle particularly hard unless you're prepared to pause every nanosecond.

★ Set up your keyboard macros, particularly if you do a lot of Thieving, set Pick Locks to "Z" and the Stealth and Find Traps to suitable keys where you want to be stealthy and find traps at the same time.

★ Your party has to have a thief. In early stages of the game, you should not remove Imoen for she will get you out of rough spots as well as thief cool free stuff. You need her or any thief to have at least 50% pick locks, 60% stealth, and 60% find traps before Chapter 6.

★ For narrow dungeons or subterranean levels use the first group formation.

★ Make your warriors stand in front and keep your group well balanced. Use the 2nd formation for this kind of group.

★ When moving about the map use a character with high stealth to scout first. Make sure you turn off the AI because if the stealth fails the character will immediately attack and attract attention.

★ To kill monsters that outnumber you use a wizard that can cast the web or stinking cloud spell. Take off your AI enable and have the stealthiest group member find



the target. Have your wizard ready the stinking cloud or web spell and fire just near the closest enemy in the group. Once the spell is cast, use archers and magic users to take them out from a distance.

★ When you have too much in your inventory and don't want to throw anything away go to Beregost and into Jovial Inn. At the end of the tavern upstairs there's a room with two drawers in it beside the bed. These draws are empty and you can keep quite a lot of stuff in them.

★ Don't adorn yourself with jewellery, sell it instead. Only wear magical items.

★ Use the character with the highest Charisma to buy stuff for the group, that way you can get it cheaper.

★ To attack a group of monsters or NPCs one at a time use the stealth character to locate just one or two opponents first, then fire an arrow and run back, only those you see will chase, not the whole group.



★ To stealth and find traps at the same time. First hide in shadows then click on find traps. This way you get a few seconds of stealth. Then hit the hide in shadows again and hope that you succeed.

★ When you've finished a subquest remove party members so that the XP shared is among those who you really need to increase a level. For example, if you have 6 people in the party, 2000XP will only come to about 333XP per person. But if you remove 3 of them and have only 3 left, each person in the party will receive about 667XP each. That way, your main character will advance really quickly.

Fallout 2

★ If you have a perception of 6 you can notice the bridge guard's sharpened spear and he will tell you to bring him a piece of flint from your aunt so he may sharpen yours. You can either steal the flint from your aunt, give her three healing powders, or talk her out of it.

★ Hakunin asks you to cleanse his garden. Simply kill the evil looking plants in the garden outside his tent.

★ Your brother will ask you to find his dog. Go to the area filled with geckos, kill them, get the dog, and return it for 100 exp.

★ Blow up the impenetrable door with plastic explosives.

★ You can gain 100 experience by repairing the well.

★ The missing townspeople Marcus is looking for are in the caves beneath the residential section. One of the entrances to the caves is near the talking plant.

★ If you win the boxing title in New Reno, you get the prize fighter karmic trait.

★ If you star in a movie for the Corsican brothers in New Reno, you can get the Porn Star karmic trait.



CODE

For when no one's looking...

Warzone 2100

While playing, press the T key, then type one of the following codes. Note: All cheating scoundrels will need version 1.01 of the game.

DOUBLE UP - all units twice as powerful

GET OFF MY LAND - kills all enemy units on map

HALLO MEIN SCHATZ - skips mission

KILL SELECTED - kills selected units

SHOW ME THE POWER - 1,000 extra power

TIME TOGGLE - toggles mission timer

WORK HARDER - completes all active research

Army Men 2

Enter message mode by pressing the "\ " key, then type "I!WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS..." (don't forget the exclamation mark and three dots). Enter any of the codes, if you can stand the shame.

I!PATTON'S SPEECH - inspires your troops

I! GIVE UP - restarts level

I!VENI VIDI VINCI - skip level

I!NIGHT OF THE WALKING DEAD - enemies turn into zombies

I!SUICIDE KINGS - kills Sarge

I!NINJA ART - gives Sarge stealth and speed

I!GOD OF GAMBLERS - gives random item

Baldur's Gate

A quick correction to the cheat we listed in PCPP #37 Code. Open the file baldur.ini in your Baldur's Gate directory and add the line "Cheats=1" under the Game Options entry. That's "Cheats=1" as in ONE.



Heroes of Might & Magic 3

While adventuring in Erathia, press Tab and type in the following codes:

NWONLYAMODEL - builds all buildings in castle

NWCSIRROBIN - immediate failure

NWCTROJANRABBIT - immediate success

NWCAVERTINGOUREYES - hero gets 35 archangels

NWCANTIOCH - hero gets tent, ballista, and

ammo cart

NWCIGOTBETTER - hero gains one level

NWCCASTLEANTHRAX - hero receives highest luck

NWCCOCONUTS - hero receives unlimited move points

NWCMUCHREJOICING - hero receives highest morale

Requiem

Press Enter to bring up the console window, then type CSMILTON to enable the less-than-angelic cheat mode. You can now enter any of the following codes, but you won't be entering heaven:

CSITEMS - Medlab pass

CSSHROUD - full armor and health

CSHEALTH - full health

CSROSARY - all items

CSAMMO - all ammunition

CSGUNS - all guns

CSYHWH - god mode

NWCALREADYGOTONE - reveals puzzle map

NWGENERALDIRECTION - reveals entire world map

NWCSHRUBBERY - increases all resources

NWCTIM - hero receives all magic and 999 spell points

NWCFLESHWOUND - hero gains Death Knights

Redline

When the heat gets too much, hold the G, O, and D keys simultaneously to display the command line. Next, enter a code to prove to the world just how wimpy you are.

IMMORTAL - god mode on

MORTAL - god mode off

RETICLE - smart reticle, turns red when over a target

CAMERA - third-person view when on foot

TARGETS - targeting for on-foot weapons

DMDAMAGE - double damage when on foot

RADAR - radar when on foot

CW - all car weapons

CA - all car ammo





LAN Party Essentials

The LAN needs a master plan. Spoonman has been doing it for longer than he can remember. Come share in his wisdom...





While back we looked at some of the great times that can be had at big LAN parties. This is all well and good if all you have to do is turn up with your rig, but if you're the host, there will plenty of other things you'll have to deal with. Things like food, power, tension and stress-release, and the all too frequent network crash - to name but a few. When you've got a score of eager gamers pumped up with sugar and cola-related food stuffs, you're going to be in big trouble when things don't run smoothly. Angry game players are not something you want to deal with at a LAN party. Fortunately, we've all been to and organised enough LAN parties (and even screwed some of them royally) to know how they work.

Planning is probably the most important factor of doing a LAN right. Make sure you know exactly how many people are coming and what they're bringing. Try to make sure they don't bring any "friends" along you haven't catered for. Most importantly, make sure people pay their money, there's nothing worse than finding on the third day there's no money left and forty mouths to feed.

Delegate to buggery

The first thing you need to do is work out who is in charge. Having a sole organiser of a

larger LAN event is not a very smart idea. It's much smarter to have a couple of your closest and most trusted friends helping you out. Firstly, if things go wrong (and something ALWAYS does) the blame can be spread more evenly - which is much more preferable than having twenty or so gamers out for one person's blood (especially if it's yours); secondly, it's much easier to have a couple of people delegating and overseeing tasks (like, serving the grub or working on the freshly downed PCs) to ensure smoother operation and a faster response to any down-time; and finally, if the sole organiser has to leave for some reason at any time the whole thing has the potential to plunge into total anarchy. If there is one person who organises food, accommodation, networking and power who suddenly gets called in to work there are going to be a lot of confused and unhappy people around. Having other people in charge will ease the load and (usually) help ensure a smooth-running event.

So, it's ideal to have three or four people who at know something about everything. On top of that, it's a great idea to make sure every body attending knows the layout of the network itself, what food is being eaten and when, and any other consequen-

tial information a general LAN attendee might need to know about. That way, there will always be someone around who won't try re-wiring the hall or calling up for fifteen kg's of Chinese takeaway because they thought the hamburger patties were for Tuesday.

The Big Budget

It might sound like drudgery but budgeting is incredibly import, if you run out of money for your LAN people will be out for blood. Food is obviously going to be the major money spender, along with a place to actually hold the LAN. Buying food requires two things, forward thinking and common sense. You need to think ahead in terms of how much people will eat, and how much it will cost per head. Work out how much the hall will cost each and add that to the food cost, add a little bit more to be on the safe side (and hey there might be a bit on the side for you) and you should have rough figures at what you should charge people. We found that for four days you could get by on \$25 each, a lot of parents would give their kids \$25 just to be rid of them for four days.

Mmmmm.. food...

LAN food doesn't have to be exotic - pizzas one night, general-

ly chip sandwiches for lunches, and of course sausages for the other nights will always please hungry gamers (providing they're not vegetarian - suckers!). Remember - people are here to play games not marvel at your culinary genius. Some idea of cooking is always welcome though, and a well-catered event will usually result in a memorable LAN experience. LAN tip #3923b - try to enforce the "bring your own munchies" rule. Sharing should be encouraged and every extra little bit counts. It could be the factor that prevents a riot being started by the most unforgiving lynch mob ever known - a pack of hungry gamers.

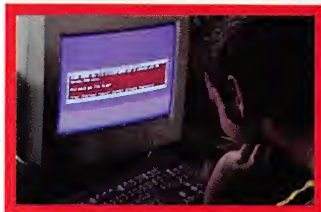
Location, location, location

Finding a place to hold the LAN Party is sometimes difficult. Power considerations are of utmost importance, as is enough room to stretch and not feel too "crowded in".

An ideal venue for a multi day, many people LAN party should have:

- (Obviously) enough space to put the computers.
- Enough tables and chairs for people to use, even though people can bring them it's a lot less hassle if they are already there.
- Enough other room for sleeping, eating and generally stuffing around. This sort of





space is best if it's in a different room to the computers since people will get pretty annoyed if you start throwing footballs around their precious PCs.

- Preferably a big kitchen. Obviously some meals have to be cooked to ensure the price doesn't skyrocket too much.

- Bathrooms and Showers. Sixty people not showering for four days is bad. Trust me.

Finding one of these venues isn't as hard as you might think. Scout halls are generally ok, and maybe free if you know the right people. Church halls are generally better since they tend to be bigger and cater more for larger functions. Otherwise there are more costly options such as community halls and proper function rooms. These can be good, but come at a price.

The Juice

Most people realise that computers require power and without power a PC is but a large paper weight. Power problems are probably the worst type you can have, so if you plan on holding a big LAN be

aware of the power situation at the respective party location. It would also be wise to come up with a plan on how you can combat these problems in advance, to prevent excessive down times. If you want more than about twenty computers or so, single phase power is not enough. Look for a venue with at least two phase power if not three. If you don't have access to that much current then you could probably ask the neighbours if you could run a lead over the fence. Just make sure there are no actual connections outside, as water and electricity don't mix well.

The Network

Networking is a big issue as well. A great setup is to have a beast sever with a 100Mbit network card plugged straight into a switch and then 8 port hubs off that. Not having a switch on a large network is pretty suicidal as hubs daisy chained together are pretty conducive to a slow network. Forget about co-axial cable, it just isn't worth it. If you have less than twenty players daisy chained hubs are all right, but any more you're going to want a switch. Use the best computer as a server and if it needs to be dedicated (not playable), let the owner swap around between other people's PCs. Remember to keep it orderly too.

LAN party = gaming nirvana

Once you get the main things worked out - those being venue, networking, food and attendees - you haven't got too much to worry about. Little things will probably crop up during the party, but if you've planned the party well, these should hardly be a source of any major grief. Work out who hates who and if they're both invited don't put them on the same table. Work out who no one likes and don't invite them at all. Basically what you want is to have all the details sorted out before the party, so you don't have spend the entire time fixing people's problems. That way, you actually get to play the games, and everyone's happy. And that's what the LAN party is all about. A group of hard core gamers sharing their passion, and having a unforgettable time on top of that.

Rod "Spoonman" Campbell

The Spoonman would like to once again thank Vincent Packer for organising Gibstock IV (with his help mind you) and Gra and Kevin for the photos. Bring on the next Gibstock!



LAN Power

Phases, circuits, eh.. What?

How much power does a computer use?

In layman terms, computers "pull" current from the power supply when switched on. The amount of this pull is measured in amperes (or amps). Each computer pulls roughly 1/2 an amp, but it's safer to assume that they pull a full amp since some pull extra during hardware intensive games such as 3D shooters etc. This should mean that on a 20 Amp circuit you should be able to run twenty computers. This isn't necessarily true though, because with so many devices (PCs, speakers, monitors etc.) running off the circuit it gets a bit unstable, so you'll find the safety switch going off at inopportune times. Its actually quite a bit more complex than that, but in general, more than twenty computers on each "phase" will cause some problems.

How many phases have I got?

Think of a phase as being a really big circuit. First things first. Find the meter box. Generally there will be one dial for the hot water system and all the other ones are for phases. A house then with electric hot water and three dials would have two phases. Places with gas hot water and three dials have three phases. Another way is to look at the wires coming into the building from the telegraph poles - two wires wrapped around each other means single phase. Any more and chances are you'll have more phases to play with.

What now?

Start by working out where each phase's power points are. It would be no good having three phases and connecting all your PCs into one of them. An easy way to find each one is to grab a kettle (or anything else that heats something, they draw a lot of current) and make sure there is no other electrical activity in the building. Plug it into a power point and turn it on. Then go look in the meter box, the dial that's spinning like crazy is the phase you have plugged into. Once you have isolated where each phase is in the building you can run cables from each one to the compute area, and hopefully not overload any of them.

What else do I need to do?

It's always good to isolate the circuits within the phases also. Spreading the computers evenly around the circuits will also help overloading and hopefully stop fuses blowing. After you've worked out where the phases are start pulling fuses out and see which power points do and don't still work. Once you've worked out what power is where, you're away (remember to plug the fuses back in though).

Spread the power evenly around and you shouldn't have too many problems. If you don't feel confident messing around with the meter box etc. don't do it. Find someone who knows how these things work and ask them. Burning buildings down is not good for your health, or your wallet.



My second NBA Championship won't be so surprising.

Air Zoom GP Footwear

Lateral support. Maximum cushioning.

Dri-FIT Mesh Shorts

V-slit for free movement. Ultra absorbent fabric.

Dri-FIT Top

Breathable. Stitchless design prevents chaffing.

THIS IS THE NIKE ALPHA PROJECT

Redefining Performance.

QUAKE

NEWS

QUAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL TO THE BEAT OF THE GAME THAT WILL LAST FOREVER. BY ELIH B. AKA 'CAULFIELD

CURRENT VERSIONS:

(*=changed since last issue)

TEACHING TOOLS:

Gladiator Bot - v0.94*
www.botepidemic.com/
 OSP Rocket Olympics - v1.01
www.planetquake.com/osp/rocketo/

DEATHMATCH/TEAMPLAY MODS:

Action Quake2 - v1.51
action.telefragged.com/
 ChaosDM - v1.11
www.planetquake.com/chaotic/
 Cry Havoc- v3.01
www.planetquake.com/cryhavoc/
 Generations- v0.98a*
www.planetquake.com/generations/
 Head Hunters - v2.50
www.planetquake.com/headhunters/
 Holy Wars- v2.21
www.planetquake.com/holywars/
 Jail Break- v2.0 (v2.3a Server)
www.planetquake.com/rxn/jail/main.shtml
 Keys2 - v1.94 (final)
www.planetquake.com/keys2/
 King Of The Hill - v2.0
www.planetquake.com/osp/koth/
 NavySeals- not listed
nf.telefragged.com/
 Night Hunters- v1.51
www.planetquake.com/nighthunters/
 NIQ - v1.95
www.planetquake.com/niq/
 Qpong - v1.0
www.planetquake.com/rxn/qpong/
 Revenge Of Stoggos - v1.32beta
www.planetquake.com/ros/
 Rocket Arena - v2.250
www.planetquake.com/servers/arena/
 Star Wars TC - not listed
sw.telefragged.com/
 Terror Quake2 - 5.0beta
terror.telefragged.com/
 Urban DM/CTF- 2.0alpha/preview
www.captured.com/urban/
 Weapons Factory - 4.2
www.captured.com/weaponsfactory/
 Weapons Of Destruction - v6.06
www.telefragged.com/weapons/

SERVER SIDE MODS:

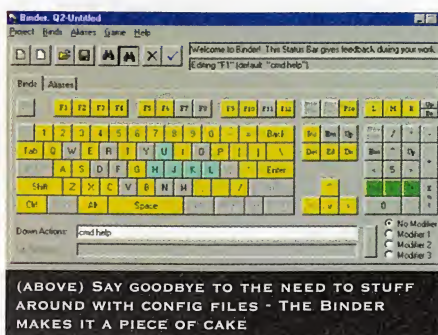
Countdown - not listed
www.planetquake.com/rxn/countdown/

OSP Tourney DM- v1.68*

(try team-insta-gib-railguns - you have to love one-shot-one-kill!)

www.planetquake.com/OSP/
 MatchMod - v1.02beta*
www.planetquake.com/matchmod/

Got a mod that you think should be listed? Drop me the link and a line to clih@uq.net.au



(ABOVE) SAY GOODBYE TO THE NEED TO STUFF AROUND WITH CONFIG FILES - THE BINDER MAKES IT A PIECE OF CAKE

THE BINDER

BECOMING BAFFLED BY BINDS?
 THE BINDER COMES TO YOUR AID!

www.planetquake.com/otser/

We've told you time and time again how essential it is to have a setup that you're comfortable with. We've told you that having your own personal configuration file can mean the difference in communication, action and the achievement of you topping the frag count.

Manually editing your configuration files can be a tedious task - typing the same words over and over, finding that you've entered misplaced quotation marks - not all of us are programmers - even if it is in one of the simplest forms...

That's where The Binder comes into play. Using an interface which shows the layout of a simple keyboard, users can click on the button they want to bind, then enter the required action in the boxes below it. The binder's power comes from the ability to import and

MOD OF THE MONTH

NAVY FORTRESS

NF.TELEFRAGGED.COM

Picture Navy Seals, Under Siege, Action Quake2 and Team Fortress; envelope them all into one fine package and you've got Navy Fortress, a deathmatch/teamplay class-based modification for Quake2.

Navy Fortress sticks to the classic fortress-style gameplay by including nine predictable classes: the Scout, Sniper, Soldier, Demoman, Medic, Heavy Weapons Guy, Pyro, Spy and an Engineer. Sure, it sounds like a modification on the "Weapons Factory" type theme, but the deviation comes from the addition of fourteen new true-to-life weapons to replace your previous arsenal.

The Mod boasts a selection of features including player operated turrets and vehicles, Navy style single player shoot 'em up missions (Rainbow 6 style without the strategy!), wound bleeding and realistic player-reloading weaponry. Six game modes including "Rescue the Hostage," "Protect the VIP," "Catch the Bomb," and "The Hunted" all make for an interesting variant from the traditional vanilla style gameplay.

Navy Fortress sticks to the elements of the tried and tested team fortress gameplay and is made exponentially more enjoyable through the awesome array of weaponry and stealthy gameplay.



CONSOLE COMMAND OF THE MONTH

This Month contains multiple commands to customise your railgun for use within the Q3TEST.

crosshairsize 12 - This designates the size of your on screen crosshair.

cg_railtrailtime 1000 - This is the time that the railgun trail takes to fade away (crank it up!).

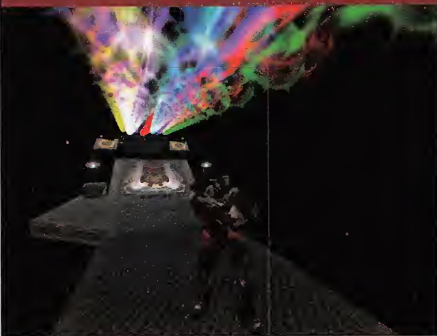
r_railcorewidth 1 - This is the width of the core of the railgun.

r_railwidth 80 - Total width of the rail spiral.

r_railsegmentlength 10 - Length between railgun spirals.

color 3 [0-7] - This gives your weapons a custom colour effect. The choices (from zero) are: base (white), blue, green, cyan, red, magenta, yellow and white.

The figures shown above can be customised to anything you like (within reason), though shown above are the figures that I'm currently comfortable with.



export binds, aliases and entire configuration files from anywhere within your hard drive. This allows you to pick and choose the best elements from multiple config files, and create your own using The Binder's simple constructing utility.

The Binder is an essential utility that is recommended for both newbies and veterans alike.

Q3TEST FUTURE PHASES

Future test releases of Q3:ARENA will be performed in a simulcast release scenario (ie Mac/Linux/Win32 release on the same day), with the next major test phase likely to involve a one-on-one map for tournament play (grins) and new executables with exciting server and game modifications. The third phase is likely to incorporate new team-play variants on the original "already-released" maps, with the final TEST release being the one that will incorporate both bots and ranks. The DEMO and actual RELEASE of Quake3:Arena is likely to follow, though no actual dates have been set on the release of these stages.



Q3TEST BENCHMARK FIGURES

Although preliminary, id programmer Brian Hook released the current Benchmark figures on a variety of setups. For a full reproduction, check out the cover CD under the /quake directory. Note that all frames per second (fps) are shown with dynamic lighting enabled.

(INTEL Celeron 400, 96Mb RAM, 16-bit colour)

CHIPSET	BOARD	SPEED (FPS)
TNT2 Ultra (150/183) 32MB	Guillemot Xentor 32	50.4
S3 Savage4 32Mb	Creative 3D Blaster Savage4	48.7
3Dfx Voodoo3 3000 16Mb	3Dfx Voodoo3 3000	47.0
3Dfx Voodoo3 2000 16MB	3Dfx Reference Board	46.6
Nvidia Riva TNT2 32MB	Elsa Erazor III	36.3
3Dfx Voodoo2 12MB	3Dfx Reference Board	36.0
Nvidia Riva TNT 16MB	STB Velocity 4400	35.4
3Dfx Voodoo Banshee 16MB	Ensoniq OEM board	35.2
Matrox G400 MAX 32MB	Matrox G400 MAX	32.7
ATI Rage 128 32MB	ATI Rage 128 32MB	39.7
S3 Savage3D 8MB	Hercules Terminator Beast	26.3
Nvidia Riva128ZX 8MB	STB Velocity 128	25.2
Intel i740 8MB	Jaton	24.5
Matrox G200 16MB	Matrox G200 16MB	21.8
ATI Rage Pro 8MB	ATI Rage Pro	19.6
Rendition V2200 8MB	Rendition Reference	15.1
3Dfx Voodoo 4MB	Diamond Monster 3D	13.9

As you can see from the above test, the TNT2 Ultra is the Q3 card to have, and what's amazing is that the test was run on the TNT2's beta drivers. The horizon looks promising for this card - check out an Australian comparison at: www.dansdata.com/TNT2s.htm



CATWALK TALENTS

This image shows off some of the up and coming models that will appear in Quake3:Arena - they may not be as attractive as Nikki Taylor, but they still look pretty darn cool. No prizes for guessing that the model on the right is likely to be the "heavy class."

SPICY HANDLES

Spice up your nick with:
**Q3A JAVASCRIPT
FUNNAME EDITOR**
[www.lockandload.
com/jitspoe/q3funnames.html](http://www.lockandload.com/jitspoe/q3funnames.html)

As many of you who have played over the internet already would be aware, the names of players can be customised to a greater extent beyond that of standard text characters. The aforementioned JavaScript editor allows you to add the characters you want to see by clicking on their corre-

sponding image. This is exported to a text file and can then be pasted into your own personal configuration file.

STAY TUNED READERS

Next month prepare to reap the havoc from QGL LAN tournament with demos from 12hours of gaming from over 100 players including myself.

Sorry, but I couldn't get them onto the CD by the time this one went to press - but hey? Next month be prepared for the largest Quake cover CD action ever.



HAVING TROUBLE GETTING PAST THE HARD BITS?

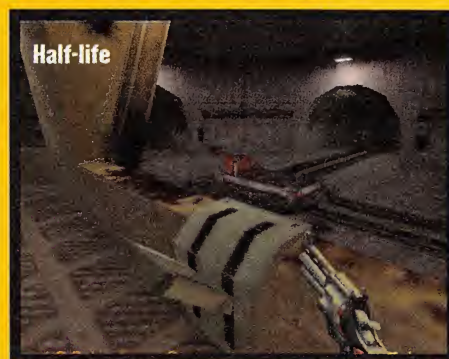
YOU CAN HAVE

CHEAT CODES • LEVEL WALKTHROUGHS • TIPS & TACTICS • ALL THE GAME HELP YOU NEED

RIGHT NOW!

Next Gaming's Institute of Responsible Cheating brings you the gaming salvation you need!

FAX-ON-DEMAND gives you the help you need and is just a phone call away. What's more, each FAX-ON-DEMAND has been hand-crafted to cram as much helpful info on a page as possible, so you know you're getting value. Plus, we give you bonus cheats and game advice! Each FAX-ON-DEMAND has been carefully designed to look good and be readable regardless of how old your fax machine is! Too good! To make your life easy, we've split up each game so you can cut straight to the chase - you only pay for the help you need!



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THE GAMES

Yell and scream if the games you want aren't here! We'll do our best to keep you happy. Email us (pcpowerplay@next.com.au), fax us (02 9310 1315) or write (FAX-ON-DEMAND, 78 Renwick St Redfern NSW 2016).

Commandos

100	Missions 1-4
101	Missions 5-10
102	Missions 11-17
103	Missions 18-20 plus tips & Survival tips

Half-Life

110	We've got hostiles
111	Power Up, On the Rails (Part 1)
112	On the Rails (Part 2), Apprehension, Residue Processing
113	Questionable ethics, Surface Tension (Part 1)
114	Surface Tension (Part 2), Forget about the Freeman, Lambda Core, Xen, Gonaar's Lair
115	Interloper, Nihilanth and weapon descriptions

Dune 2000

120	Atreides Missions 5-7
121	Atriedes Missions 8-9, Harkonnen Mission 5
122	Harkonnen Mission 6-9
123	Ordos Mission 5-9

Starcraft

130	General strategies, Protoss
131	Human, Zerg

Forsaken

140	Volcano subway, nuclear power station, thermal power station, FedBank, Prison Ship, Asteroid Base
141	Bio-Sphere, Subterranean Complex, Capsized Ship, Orbital Station, Shuttle Bus, Military Bus, Tloloc Temple, Secret Level

Rainbow 6

150	General tactics, cheats, weapons
151	Missions 1-16

Dark Reign

160	Freedom Guard 3-5
161	Freedom Guard 6-8
162	Freedom Guard 9-12
163	Imperium 3-8
164	Imperium 11-13

Blade Runner

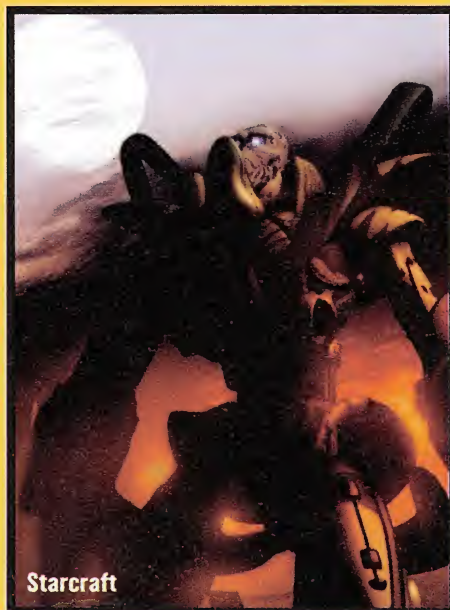
170	Act 1, Act 2 Tyrell Building, Police Station
171	Act 2 (from Animoid Row), Act 3
172	Act 4, Act 5

Curse of Monkey Island

180	Parts 1 & 2
181	Parts 3, 4, 5 & 6

The Last Express

190	All Q&A
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**Starcraft**

How to use FAX-ON-DEMAND:

1. If your fax machine has a phone handset, pick it up and dial 1902 220 423. Follow the instructions given by the warm and friendly mystery voice. You will be asked to key-in the 3-digit code for the game/games you want faxed-back.
2. If your fax machine DOES NOT have a handset, ensure your phone is on the same line as the fax, or use the fax's SPEAKER function. Dial 1902 220 423 and follow the instructions. Press 'Start' on your fax when the voice asks you to do so.
3. Stand back and marvel, as moments later the game help you need rolls majestically forth from your fax machine.

Important: All calls are charged at \$2.50 per minute. Calls from mobile and pay phones may attract a higher rate. Make sure you have permission from the person who pays the phone bill if you're under 18! All charges will appear on your regular phone bill.

TECH SUPPORT. If weird stuff happens, or nothing at all, call 02 9212 4222 for help.

When you and your PC are in need, Doc Ashman takes heed!

When you write, remember to include as much pertinent information as possible. Send your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT and any associated *.INI files for Windows that might tell us more about your problem. Give us as detailed an explanation as you can and be sure to include as much detail as possible about your PC. Feel free to email your questions or, if you want to snail mail, please remember to write clearly or better still, print your letters. Please note that due to the volume of messages we receive, we cannot guarantee a response to your queries.

Setup
PC PowerPlay
78 Renwick St
Redfern
NSW 2016
setup@pcpowerplay.next.com.au

DVD dumbness

Q I have just installed a Creative DVD kit, it works really well and I am very happy with it. I was borrowing DVDs from one of my friends the other day and he gave me a zone 1 DVD. This didn't play in on my machine as it is the American zone. Australia is part of zone 4. Anyhow he has a program that lets his DVD player change zones as many times as he likes, I guess I'll have to look for that type of thing for my player :-)

It still leaves the question, why did they bother with the zoning if there are zone changing programs out there? Many shops here sell American and Japanese DVDs (zones 1 and 2) why, when this is zone 4? Shouldn't the retailers keep to the zoning standards. Is there a zone changer for the Creative PC-DVD Encore 5X with Dxr3?

Thanks
Matt

A The zones are an idea of the US movie studios to control distribution of movies around the world. It's a pain because most of them aren't bothering to encode movies for our region. All up it's not particularly effective, as Australians are just ordering DVD drives from the US along with zone 1 encoded movies. Very early DVD players are 'zoneless' and if you have one of these you're doing well as they can play any zone. Alternatively, you can use software, as your friend does, to change zones. It's nice and easy when you've got a PC, but remember DVD players are also sold stand-alone as set-top units, and you can't tweak them with software.

All up Doc Ash thinks it's just a wee bit silly. It reminds him of a similar situation by the RIAA (Recording Industry Association of America) to try and control the distribution of music in electronic format. Presently they've been coming down heavy on MP3 sites and even musicians who have chosen to release music on the Web using the MP3 format. Word has it they are paranoid of losing their influence over the music industry, as direct publishing like this removes the 'middleman'. Problem is, this also stifles new talent for the exact same reason — many new bands are releasing their music on the Web for free to get known. Recently they've announced work on a proprietary digital music format (called SDMI, Secure Digital Music Initiative) that would force software and hardware vendors who license the format to include a form of 'kill' switch that will stop users downloading and playing MP3s. Doc Ash thinks all this paranoid behaviour is just hurting everyone involved and that certain organisations (yeah, that's you RIAA) should get a clue and realise you can't stop, or control, the distribution of information over a worldwide public medium like the Internet. Hmm, this sounds awfully a lot like the Internet censorship bill that got passed in Canberra at the time this was written. The solution is to learn to work with it, not against it. But when there's money or power involved, common sense often comes last. [rant off]

Fast AGP

Q I was reading an old PcPowerplay the other day when I stumbled on the specs of your PC. I was wondering how you got the video card to work at an AGP speed of 74 MHz rather than the normal 66MHz without any problems. Are AGP cards stable at 74 MHz? How about any higher?

Letter of the Month Win a PSI Hercules Dynamite TNT

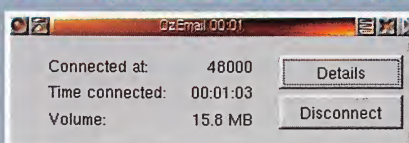
Baud versus bps

Q I own a 28.8 KBPS modem and lately I have been getting whopping 115 KBPS connections and everything loads really fast, do you know why? Also when I was downloading something the other day (MP3 I think) it said I was downloading at 400 KBPS but it was dropping at about 30 KB every second until it got down till about 7 KBPS, WHY?

Patrick Stevenson

A You've touched on two different issues here. The first is to do with your baud rate, the speed at which your PC talks to your modem (down that serial cable that connects the two). Your modem can talk to your PC at 115200 and higher without any problems, even though the modem itself can only transmit, for example, 28.8k down the phone line. As a general rule, you should always set your baud rate at twice the speed of the modem, which is why 56k users often have their baud rate set to 115200. What you're seeing when Windows reports 115200 is not the speed your modem connected at, but the baud rate. If you don't have a proper init string for your modem Windows will be unable to read the connection speed from the modem once it connects and will instead default to displaying the baud rate (something it can detect).

Why are high baud rates useful? Just because the modem can't send any faster than its rated speed doesn't stop you sending or receiving more information from it quicker. This is important when it comes to downloading non-compressed information, such as Web pages. HTML is just ASCII text, and text compresses -very- well. If you've ever tried compressing a text file using Zip you'll notice how much you can compress compared to binary files like executables. Now,



Connected at:	48000	Details
Time connected:	00:01:03	Disconnect
Volume:	15.8 MB	

The speed displayed here is the connection rate, the speed the modem transfers down the phone line. By comparison the baud rate is the speed the modem talks to your PC.

compression works by looking for patterns in information and replacing them with less bytes than the pattern itself takes up. In text files, such repetition is all over the place — our language makes it easy. So, what modern modems do is compress the information they receive before they send it, and the modem on the other end decompresses it before sending it to the PC. For binary files, and especially files already compressed (Zip files, for example) it makes very little difference. However for textual information, the modem fits in more data per packet as it were that it sends to the other modem. When that information arrives, your modem decompresses it and sends it to the PC, which it will do at a rate equal to the speed you've told it to communicate with - the baud rate. So, if you set a low baud rate and you're downloading information that compresses well, you may not be receiving it as fast as you could be. This is why you sometimes see your downloads achieve rates higher than the modem speed when you've set a high baud rate.

As for the transfer rate and its eventual drop, when you first start a transfer (say, with Netscape) it's trying to work out the download speed based on how fast its receiving information, and it's always going to take a few seconds to level out, that's just the software. As for it dropping to less than 1k a second, this is simply a reflection of the quality of your ISP's service and where you happen to be downloading from. If the site is overseas, and the network is congested, packets will go missing and this will be reflected by a lower transfer rate (the rate is gauged on how frequently information is received). This can't be helped, other than choosing another download site or a more reliable ISP.



The Creative Encore 5X DVD Drive and Card (reviewed in last month's 3D technews) See letter DVD Dumbness

The other question has to do with cooling your video card. You said that you "rubber banded a P2 heatsink + fan on your video card". However where are you plugging the power cable of the fan? Is there an outlet on the card, or are you plugging the fan's power on a power outlet of the motherboard? The only fan power outlet I know is the CPU fan outlet. Are there also others and how do you distinguish one? I'm buying a new PC with a TNT video card and overclocking it for more power, any info on cooling will be appreciated.

Stan Kotsomimikos

A It's true that AGP cards are a little more sensitive to overclocking - they're already handling the AGP bus speed - but most cards should have no probs pushing past this a little, just as most cards shouldn't fret at a slight increase in speed on the PCI bus. Is it stable? Well, on my system the AGP TNT is. Mind you my system won't even POST on 133MHz bus, but whether this is due to my peripheral cards or the CPU isn't known.

The fan power was plugged into the motherboard - my ASUS P2B has three fan power connectors: one for CPU, one for the case and one for power (now, really, your powerpack should have one...). I used the power connector to run the fan on my TNT. However a few months ago my motherboard decided that these fan connectors should no longer provide power. I have absolutely no idea why, but I found out when my PC crashed excessively and after investigating discovered I had been running without cooling for who knows how long. Wasn't impressed. I've since hooked all three fans up to the main power, cutting and pasting wires so they fit with the Mylex plugs. She's humming smoothly again.

The truth on Y2K

Q I've heard so much about Y2K but not a lot actually telling me how it's going to affect my PC. Is it something to be aware of? Will it affect my games? Do I have to do anything? Help me PCPP, you're my only hope! Damn, I'm too wrapped up in the Star Wars frenzy.

Pete

A Woo, what a biggie. The first thing I want to say here is that chances are you've heard all sorts of doomsday stories about Y2K — there are even people in the US selling 'supplies' for bunkers so that when the end of the world comes you're all fit and ready for it. Ignore these wackos, panic merchants, and other scumbag opportunists, the truth is very simple: Y2K is a bug and it is a real problem - the effects, however, will be minor. All the most important aspects of infrastructure — banks, electricity, phone, transport etc — are already Y2K compliant. Outside of this infrastructure, large and medium companies are also Y2K compliant or are in the process of making themselves Y2K compliant. Outside this, going down to your average home user, most people are unaware of

how the problem will affect their PCs. Y2K doesn't signal the end of the world, or a change in society, or anything so bizarre. It's just a programming bug that's been recognised and corrected, and life will go on as usual come Jan 1 2000.

How will it affect you? Well, if you're just playing games you may just get an error or two in Windows, which can be avoided if you download Microsoft's Y2K fixes for Windows and its applications. Then your problem is solved. If you've got an older machine, however, you might have Y2K problems in your hardware and these are harder to solve. Some Y2K software currently available can 'patch' these problems by always running when you boot up but a better solution is to decide it's time to upgrade and buy a new, already Y2K compliant, PC.

If you use your machine to work with, you'll run into more problems. You might find Y2K holes in software you use, and even in the data you've previously stored (spreadsheets with equations, for example). This is the hardest part of becoming Y2K compliant — making your data compliant. The easiest

Microsoft Excel - Pension.xls

File Edit View Insert Format Tools Data Window Help

Formula bar: =(YEAR(DATEVALUE(E11))-YEAR(DATEVALUE(D11))) * 0.02 * F11

Employee	Birthdate	Start Date	Pension Date	Final Salary	Pension Amount
1 Last Name	First Name				
2 Laa	Rich	1/7/61	07/30/92	12/25/15	4606.56
3 Laa	Rich	5/23/60	05/25/98	05/10/15	4545.97
4 Laa	Tiffeny	7/27/62	02/05/79	03/04/93	4624.72
5 Laa	Kimberly	4/5/62	11/04/65	03/05/78	5621.85
6 Laa	Weyne	6/19/68	04/15/78	06/05/13	3923.26
7 Laa	Sheree	12/4/57	05/13/58	11/20/12	5260.84
8 Laa	Jen	4/21/25	04/03/79	04/01/64	5574.84
9 Laa	Olef	9/25/67	10/21/69	09/11/22	5446.06
10 Laa	Milind	3/1/68	07/10/68	02/16/33	4691.9
11 Laa	Menne	12/25/60	09/24/65	09/23/90	6033.02
12 Laa	Declen	7/7/65	04/15/68	06/23/20	5211.23
13 Laa	Edel	10/20/35	05/04/60	10/05/60	6352.62
14 Laa	Geoffrey	1/1/36	07/22/36	07/21/61	3984.53
15 Laa	Mey	10/22/56	10/15/60	10/09/11	2977.64
16 Laa	Deve	3/9/52	11/11/50	02/24/07	6260.15
17 Laa	Dani	6/14/54	07/01/67	06/23/92	3646.35
18 Laa	Sylyen	8/11/62	10/14/67	10/12/92	5597.8
19 Laa	Dave	9/27/59	04/14/61	09/13/14	5224.04
20 Laa	Kevin	2/25/40	10/05/66	02/11/95	4149.89
21 Laa	Michael	11/2/62	03/23/95	10/19/90	2964.08
22 Laa	Vivien	3/17/24	09/15/56	03/04/79	5134.17
23 Laa	Wendy	5/17/59	01/28/65	05/03/14	5579.33
24 Laa	Terri	4/25/69	02/18/67	04/11/24	5511.98
25 Laa	John	10/1/64	10/10/92	09/18/19	4041.17
26 Laa	Joseph	1/26/23	03/24/82	03/23/87	3244.01
27 Laa	Tekeshi	6/10/58	05/22/95	05/27/28	6318.48
28 Laa	Deborah	10/4/61	11/19/60	09/20/18	4682.35
29 Laa	Vicente	1/23/31	04/27/65	04/26/91	4273.32
30 Laa					

Uses a date related function and is affected by a cell whose value is near the 1900/2000 cusp. (Pensions/E11)

Norton 2000 Wizard

System Date Test

The System Date Test checks the ability of this computer to correctly handle the date change from December 31, 1999 to January 1, 2000. It also checks your Windows Short Date Format setting, which should use a 4-digit year.

Norton 2000 includes a memory-resident system date fix. The System Date Test (sometimes called a BIOS test) will tell you if you need to install this fix on this computer.

Some BIOS defects can be detected only by rebooting this computer. To safely test the functioning of the system date across a reboot, choose 'Make BIOS Reboot Test Disk' from the Tools menu. This does not apply to Windows NT systems.

☒ Perform System Date Test

Press Next to perform the System Date Test.

< Back

Next >

Cancel

Symantec's Norton 2000 Utility is a good Y2K safeguard. It will even check spreadsheets (top)

Iomega's very handy ZIP drive (see letter Slowing IDE)



thing to do here is to backup all your work before the new millennium, upgrade all your software and then handle any problems as they arise, if they arise.

Overall, as gamers, we will be among those least affected, if at all. And any effects that do pop up will be easily fixed by a software or hardware upgrade. So no, don't stress, just go download the Microsoft service packs and make sure your OS and applications are Y2K compliant, and bar any aging hardware you might have, that's about all you'll need to do. And by all means stock up on coke, pizza and choccies — not because the world is going to end, but because it'll be the Christmas holidays and you're going to need some serious fuel to keep you playing games for the holidays!

Question of RAM

Q I was wondering what would be better: 64Mb of 100Mhz or 128Mb of 66Mhz RAM. Does it go on the speed rating, as in 100 is not double 66 but 128 is double 64 so 128 @ 66Mhz is better or what? Please shed some light on this.

Andreas

A More lower speed RAM is better than less higher speed RAM, it'll have more of an impact on your system. Take note that the real reason you go out to buy PC100 RAM for PII systems is not so much that it will increase your performance ever so slightly, it's more that you need RAM that can keep up with the 100MHz bus PII systems use. So if you have a PII system, you'll need PC100 RAM regardless. You can run PC100 RAM at 100Mhz or 66MHz, but you can't run older style 66MHz RAM at 100MHz, at least not reliably. Anyway, if you're in the market for more RAM and your system needs PC100 RAM, the difference in price is negligible.

Slowing IDE

Q I will soon be buying an internal IDE Zip drive and am not sure how to connect it. If it is connected as a slave to the master hard drive, won't it slow it down? Or do I connect it to the secondary channel which has the CD-ROM connected, or to the floppy drive? If it's going to slow things down, I don't want one. Also, what's the difference between Iomega's version

and others such as Panasonic? Hope you can help me with this dilemma.
Ken

A Firstly it's true that IDE peripherals will only go as fast as the slowest device on the channel, and for IDE you have two channels of two devices each. However, this only applies while the device is active. If you had the ZIP as a slave to your hard drive, it will only drop the speed to the hard drive whilst the ZIP drive is being accessed. Note also, that this is -not- the same as the transfer speed of the devices. If you have a PIO mode 4 hard drive and the ZIP drive runs at PIO mode 4, you will not get slow downs at all in terms of the slave device slowing down the master. However it's always a good idea to leave the hard drive as the only device on the chain, and seeing as you're not always accessing your CD-ROM, and it's a slower device, you might as well stick the ZIP drive as slave to the CD-ROM. That way you have all your removable media devices on the one channel.

II or III?

Q I've been thinking of upgrading my PII to a PIII 500 but have heard reports that apart from the higher clock speeds, there's not a lot different about the PIII's. What exactly is new in the PIII? Intel make it sound like they're the next leap in computing technology. Is it worth upgrading to one?

Andrew

A There are a few new features in the PIII but the only significant change is the inclusion of the SIMD (Single Instruction Multiple Data) instruction set which is, essentially, the next version of MMX. The difference is that SIMD is a whole lot more useful and can actually make quite a big difference to programs that support it. And that's the clincher — like MMX, if games aren't written to take advantage of the new instructions, then your PIII is essentially a faster PII. Unless you want that extra clock speed, there's no need to go out spending big upgrading your PII to a PIII. I think the hype around the PIII was best summarised by a cartoon I saw on the Net: it depicted an engineer at Intel painting an extra 'I' on the end of a Pentium II.

Tech Tips

Techy things that you can do to make your PC, like, better

This month we have a handy tip submitted by Ndjamena Darkwoods.

Open book

Here's a tip that someone might find interesting. To make Windows open unknown files with notepad rather than with Open with... type the following into notepad, save it as <something>.reg and then run it.

REGEDIT4

```
[HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\*\shell]
@=""
```

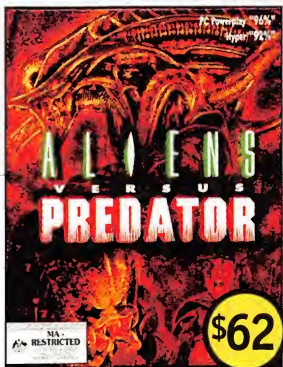
```
[HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\*\shell\Open_with_
Notepad]
@="Open with Notepad"
```

```
[HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\*\shell\Open_with_
Notepad\command]
@="c:\\windows\\notepad.exe %1"
```

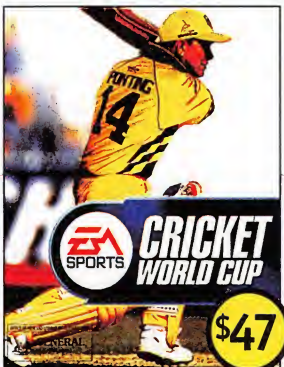
The Open with... function will still be available by right clicking the files.† The Open with Notepad function will be available to all files (including executables) but will not override the defaults of known classes. I found it useful for editing all the TA files.

P.S. you could always do it with Regedit, it only took me a bit of fiddling to find out how, but that would need a lot more explaining.

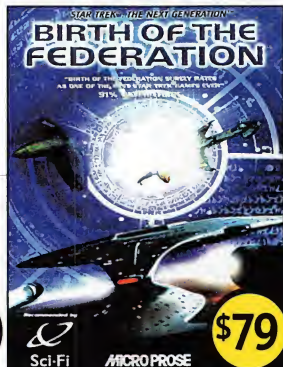
LATEST GAME SPECIALS



Aliens vs Predator



Cricket World Cup



Star Trek BOF



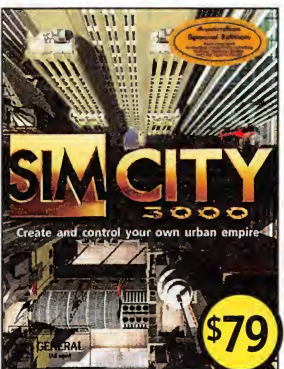
Mechwarrior 3



Sports Car GT



Rollercoaster Tycoon



SimCity 3000



Star Wars Racer



X-Wing Alliance



Phantom Menace

On Special... (Available while stocks last) – Commandos Beyond the Call of Duty – **\$48** • X-Wing vs Tie Fighter – **\$39** • Ignition – **\$19** • Blade Runner – **\$39** • Outpost 2 – **\$29** • Jane's Longbow Anthology – **\$39** • F-16/MIG 29 Fulcrum – **\$39** • Civilisation II + Command & Conquer – **\$39** • You Don't Know Jack Original – **\$19** • James Bond Interactive Dossier – **\$19** • Sierra Arcade Pack – **\$19** • Carmageddon II – **\$48** • Leisure Suit Larry Collection 2 – **\$59** • AFL 99 – **\$48** • Tomb Raider III – **\$48** • Diablo – **\$29** • Lords of Magic – **\$29** • Hoyles Classic Games – **\$29** •

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3D TECHNEWS

New graphics technology and the latest in 3D gaming

Fly 3D Game Engine

Fly 3D is a game engine written in C++. It currently supports Direct3D 6.1 or OpenGL 1.1 as the 3D API, Direct Input for mouse and keyboard input. It also handles DirectSound and Directplay for multiplayer.

Fly3D runs under Windows 95/98 with DirectX 6.1. So all you need now is Visual C++ and DirectX 6.1 SDK and a good 3D video card that supports OpenGL of D3D to start making your own games. One of the key features for Fly3D is the amount of plugins that this software uses, especially using the plugin wizard for C++ and with a couple of clicks you're laughing. It is also packed with an export plugin for 3D Studiomax which allows you to easily export your backgrounds as .bsp files and also your objects.

The panorama.dll plugin included is truly unique as it tends to allow for a much higher fill-rate, yet still constantly running smoothly at 80fps. Face structures that are extremely detailed are constant and can be perfectly set for each keyframe. Fly3D can also be used as another level creating tool for your Quake games that lets you go slightly further than some already available on the market. Fly3D is still yet to be put to its fullest test but, from what it has done so far is something to keep in mind for future gaming.

RAM Raiders

How do you like the sound of 512Mb of video RAM for under \$1000? It seems a group of hardcore gamers from Sydney are trying to set the video card industry on fire - well for gamers anyhow. A bunch of ex-university students have developed a video card to end all video cards currently on the market.

These guys have a collection of all the computers and console decks that came out from



late seventies to the present. They have seen the introduction of the first Pong line games and the likes of the Sega, Amstrad, Vic 20, Commodore 64, Amiga, and the PC etc. Each time they had wished for something better to come out, it did. Computer graphics have changed so much over the past few years, and we often wonder when it will end. To these guys it will end when we don't have to keep upgrading our video cards like our CPU's to play the latest games. These "Hardcore gamers", as they like to be called, have developed a video card that will hopefully ease a few problems for a while.

Currently their project is under tight wraps but they were more than happy to let PCPP in on some secrets. Firstly, the

video card is based around a well known card on the market, and a cable goes from this card to the new Card. The new card sits next to the current video card but requires another slot (PCI) on top of that for its jumbo sized fan. Now they're not giving away to many specs about this card, but they say it has a whopping 512Mb of RAM on-board.

The outfit aim to have their product retail for around the \$1000 mark. This is not bad considering some people have spent more just to get a decent 16MB card to date. The card also apparently works fine with D3D.

Dual Processor Gaming

Meanwhile, up on the Central Coast another bunch of gamers have written some software for Windows that allows them to use dual processors in Windows 95/98. Not just for your normal run of the mill programs, but games as well. Until now only NT took advantage of the dual processors, but lacked the ability to run most computer games. As Matt (he wouldn't give us his surname) quotes "If Microsoft can put those stupid easter egg things into Windows then why didn't they make it operate dual processors?". Well said, Matt.

The major problem at the moment

is that a patch has to be made for each game to utilise the dual processors. As far as video cards are concerned, there's no problem - even having a 8Mb card is fine, as the processors do all the work and all the video card does is "paint the pretty pictures". All of this sounds very good but why isn't it on the market yet Matt? "Well Microsoft have a policy on reverse-engineering their products". But keep an eye out for more news soon.

Big New Nameless Game

Can these Queenslanders with the help of some Yankees, de-throne Quake?

Moving even further up the coast it seems a bunch of ex-game developers from some rather well known computer companies have gathered together and are currently making a FPS which will conquer all games to date, so they say.

Apparently the game combines 3D animation with real humans. Imagine Doom and Quake but using real humans and animals. It





have a few secrets up their sleeves as far as the game engine is concerned, as they can now use their ideas that weren't allowed at the other companies, as it was "too advanced for now and we'll use it when we need to".

For these developers the time is now as the old engines are being licensed off to everyone. This new "game" and the software being used is all owned by the developers and not a cent has to go out to anyone.

So what is the concept of this game? There's going to be 22 levels, a selection of 15 weapons, lots of shooting, driving, hangliding and you'll get

to go "postal" on some well known companies, massive game play and there will be no cheat codes as this game is for the true fans of these kind of games.

When asked about getting it passed the censorship board due to its extreme violence, their only comment was "we have ways". As far as a demo or preview is concerned, things are being kept tight, but PCPP has been granted the first copy for review, as we were the first to find out and we are a bunch of nice people as well.

John Dominic

Hired Guns

Hired guns is a futuristic, first player shoot'em up game but with four times the fun. Set in a slick industrial world, it comprises a tense, strategic command level of gameplay. Hired Guns enables a four-way split screen to command and view your four mercenaries at hand.

Some key features are 18 brightly neon filled levels that offer a new visual surprise around every corner. Seventeen deadly weapons for offensive and defensive action. Lots of puzzle solving, strategic planning and full-on action to keep the adrenaline going. You also get to select which character to choose for what mission, based on their varying skills. It will also feature a four player LAN game, to see if you really are a good leader. Unfortunately we have to wait till at least September before we actually get a full version of this game, we'll keep you up to date with things on this one.

kind of sounds like a video game version like SWAT. "Fear not this is going to be the real thing" as Anthony Vella the co-designer explains, "The only things we are animating are the blood and flesh wounds. We are using ammunition, real explosives and blowing up cars and buildings. You will be able to shoot, axe, burn, bomb and maim practically anything that comes into sight. Every window can be smashed, every part of a car can be smashed, you can burn anything, but the best part will be that you can dismember bodies

and use the arms or legs as weapons".

The whole concept and layout was designed by four brothers from Queensland. While sitting in a pub they were overheard by a "well known and praised ex-developer" there on holidays, after being made "redundant" by a certain company due to conflict of interest. Two weeks later these four lads had \$8million in their account, a full film crew and 11 of the best game developers at hand. Now, some of these developers



SPECULAR SPOTLIGHT

Galleon

You may have heard that Galleon is a Tomb Raider clone. But that's okay, after all it is being developed by the very same guy who originally created Lara Croft. Once work had finished on Tomb Raider, designer Toby Gard left Core to set up his own development studio called Confounding Factor. Galleon has been occupying his time ever since and is now finally nearing completion.

As these alpha shots indicate, realism takes a back seat to styliness in Galleon's visual appearance. The surreal architecture is complemented nicely by the characters' exaggerated figures. One of Gard's major achievements with Tomb Raider was the exceptional animation of Lara herself, so we'll be expecting him to work similar wonders when we get a taste of Galleon's swashbuckling adventures later this year.



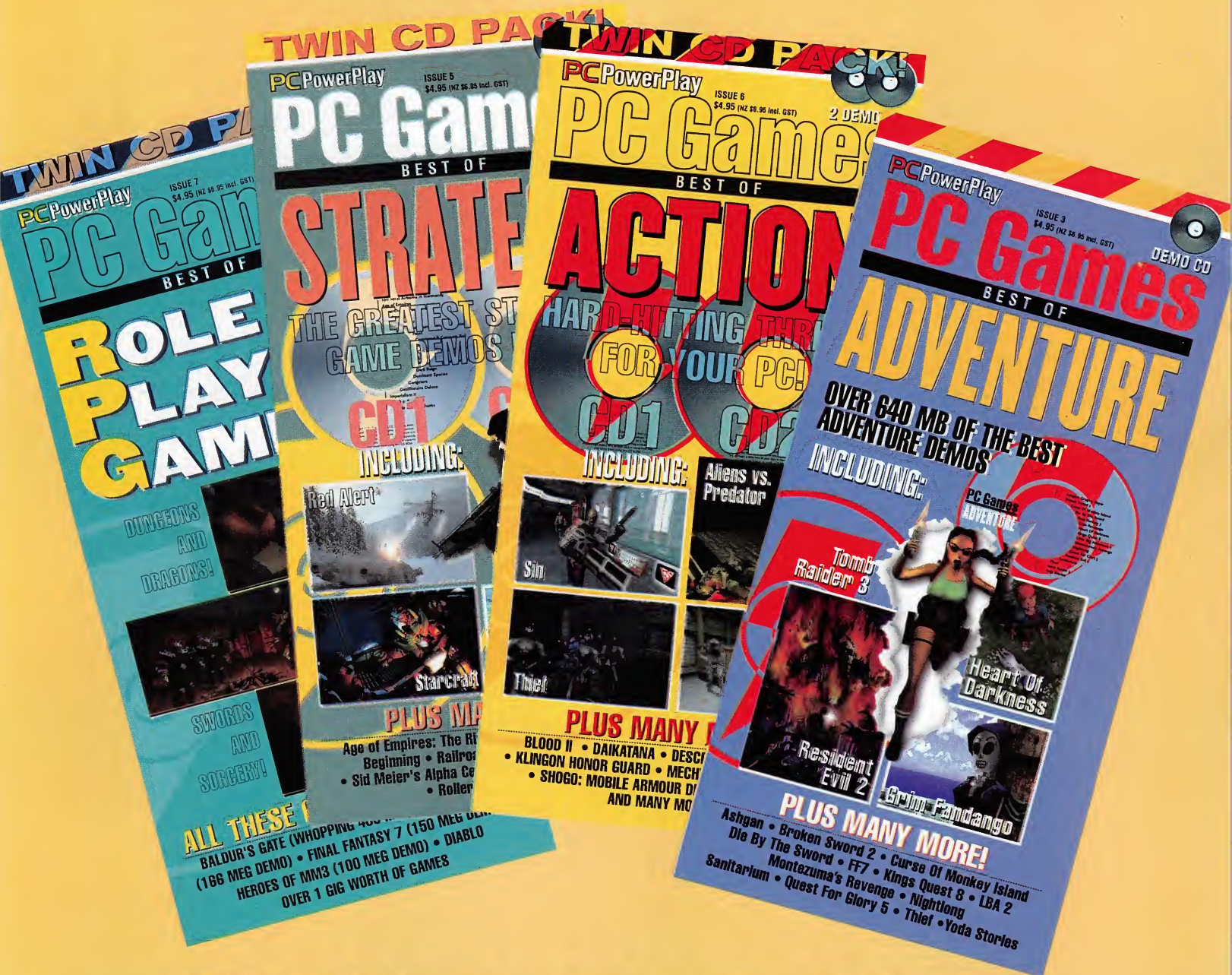
Sanity

In the past year, Monolith have proven themselves a force to be reckoned with in the field of 3D graphics engine. Produced with their proprietary Littech engine, both Blood 2 and Shogo were visually lavish games at worst. Now, one of three Littech games due this year, Sanity will provide a point of departure in form, if not content.

Instead of the typical first-person view afforded by their other games, Monolith have opted for some third-person action for Sanity. Even in its early stages, the results look impressive. Huge levels are promised, displaying considerable detail and depth of vision. The coloured lighting effects, as you can see, appear suitably extreme, while each individual character will be motion captured and comprised of around 250 polygons.



DEMOS OF ALL THE BEST GAMES!!



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Net Game News

E3 Special Edition

E3 was full of surprises. Who'd have thought that the Dukes of Hazzard series could be made into a computer game? That there was a market for an Oddworld RTS? That we could have stomached a Xena adventure game? Surprises? E3's full of 'em.

The BIG surprise though, was the treatment of multiplayer gaming. It was a major non-event. Sure, most of the games on display at E3 had some sort of multiplayer feature included. How come then, these weren't highlighted in any major way? Without some prior knowledge of the titles featured at E3, you would have been easily forgiven for thinking that most of them were single player only. Where was the fanfare surrounding multiplayer coming of age? There was a threadbare EverQuest stand at the back of one of the South Hall. No UO feature. Blizzard focused primarily on Diablo 2 as a single player game. Same with Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun. For the last few titles mentioned at least, the multiplayer aspect could be taken for granted. But how come we didn't get any major announcements regarding their online multiplayer services, like Westwood Online and Battlenet? Cavedog upped the ante recently with the announcement of Boneyards. It was really quite disappointing to see that no other developer chose E3 to see Cavedog, and raise them. (that's enough poler metaphors - Ed)

Still, there was plenty to see and definitely more than enough to whet any multiplayer gamers appetite.

Quake 3 Arena got the award for the coolest stand - a large, 3D version of the Q3A symbol, with four computers networked together atop a raised platform within it. It also featured one of the largest (and most consistent) crowds. With the likes of Paul Steed, Tim Willits, and Graeme Devine on hand to ensure a smooth demonstration, the real

challenge was getting some Q3A time in front of an id machine. It seemed at times that the id software crew were pulling the crowd just as much as the

game was, even if it was for a brief glimpse of John Carmack himself (John is surprisingly well-built in person, which is in stark contrast to what his photos imply). While the rest of the world thrashed out Q3Test1 and Q3test2, those attending E3 were lucky enough to play through a whole host of never seen before maps. These were fantastic and bared the hallmark touch of the hand of id. At this stage, Quake 3 Arena will ship with three game modes, one of which is obviously straight-up deathmatch. It seems again that id are providing the tight network code and robust graphics engine, and counting for the online community to further enhance the experience and provide alternative gameplay modes. After the exceptional Unreal Tournament, and considering that the full



release of Quake 3 Arena is still some time off, expect to see some new additions to the features list.

Just after the Ultima IX: Ascension demo, we cornered Lord British at the Origin booth and asked him about Ultima Online 2. Yep, it's in development, but as to its release date - LB remained tight-lipped. We do know though, that it'll make use of the Ultima IX: Ascension game engine. Crikey! It'll give EverQuest a run for its' money, at least in the graphics department. LB also chanced to mention that they were aware of UO's current limitations and were naturally addressing these in the sequel. No doubt, the change in perspective that comes with using the UIX engine will affect more than a few areas of gameplay. The real question is however, will we see UO 2 before we see Ultima IX: Ascension? Not likely, but remember: stranger things have happened.

Well, it was on our wishlist a few months back. Looking Glass Studios are including a multiplayer mode in the full release of Thief 2: The Metal Age, making the announcement at E3. Bumping into Steve Pearsal (lead designer) at the Thief 2 stand, we grilled him about how they'd implement multiplayer into an inherently single player experience. They've opted for a co-op mode, taking you through the same single player missions. Considering that they've yet to decide on exactly how they want to do this, the current plan is to have puzzles that require two or more people to solve, above and beyond the mission objectives of the single player game. We wait with great interest. The surprise announcement was that no deathmatch mode would be featured.

As far as multiplayer RPGs go, Vampire: The Masquerade - Redemption was the most promising. While not a massively multiplayer online RPG like EverQuest or UO, it's a single player RPG with a heavy emphasis on multiplayer. How is this so? Much like Baldur's Gate, you take part in the adventure with other live characters, though one lucky player will get the role of Dungeon Master, and will be able to change game conditions and jump into NPC characters at will. How intriguing. More on Redemption next issue.

And in other news...

Hook leaves id Software

Early June we got a surprise announcement by Brian Hook. It was that he had decided to leave id Software. Leaving a week's gap, he then announced that he was moving to Verant Software, developers of the ORPG EverQuest.

Ready for the press release spiel?

"Verant is committed to both massively multiplayer gaming as well as cutting edge 3D technology," said President and CEO of Verant Interactive, John Smedley. "Insuring





Quake III Arena



that we have the talent and expertise to lead the way in both of these fields is critical to our company's goals, and adding someone of Brian's calibre to our already strong programming team is going to help us make the best games out there."

Brian Hook added: "Verant is the perfect place for me. I'm a huge fan of their games, and the opportunity to work on Verant's future titles is just too good to pass up. I strongly believe in Verant's commitment to

making the best Massively Multiplayer games out there, and I'm excited to be able to contribute to a product line that will be the benchmark against which all other Massively Multiplayer games are judged. People are going to be blown away when they see what Verant is working on."

Make of it what you will. We here at PCPP are curious as to the other "massively multiplayer" titles Verant have been hinting at. That, and their potential, considering the

TOP 5 MULTIPLAYER GAMES

1. Quake3Arena Test
2. Half-life
3. Starsiege Tribes
4. EverQuest
5. Descent 3

To cast your vote, email ngn@pcpowerplay.next.com.au with your favourite online game

strength of EverQuest's networking and graphics code and Hook's undeniable expertise in the area. Suffice it to say that Verant Software is a developer to look out for in the future.

Aliens Versus Predator

Here are a bunch of useful console commands. To bring down the console, hit the tilde (~) key.

LISTCMD = Lists all commands

LISTEXP = Lists all text expansions.

LISTVAR = Lists all console variables.

LISTBIND = Lists all keybinds

UNBIND-ALL = Gets ride of all key bindings.

VERSION = Tells version number and date.

SAY = Broadcasts message

CDSTOP = Stop CD playing

CDPLAY = Select a track to play

CDPLAYLOOP = Select a track to play looped

CDVOLUME = Select a sound level from 0 to 127

ID_PLAYER = Get the name of the player nearest to you.

SHOW_SCORE = Show frag table count.

DETAIL_LEVEL_MAX = ? I'd assume this is for texture/graphics detail

DETAIL_LEVEL_MIN = ? Same as above, but minimal graphics?

SCREENSHOT = Takes a screenshot

EXPV = 0 INT:(0,1) (Verbose reports of text expansions)

MOTIONTRACKERVOLUME = 1.000000

FRAC:(0.000000, 1.000000) 1.0 is normal.

EXTRAPOLATE_MOVEMENT = 1 INT:(0,1)

Turn Extrapolation for movement of network opponents on and off.

BIND = Allows you to bind a command to a key. Example "BIND Q SCREENSHOT"

MIRC v5.6 released

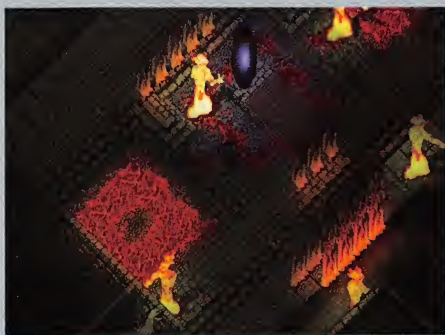
There's a new version of mIRC out. Go to <http://www.mirc.com/get.html> to get the latest version. You know you need it.

Quick Poll

In #37 we asked the question "Would you continue to subscribe to an ORPG (like Ultima Online or EverQuest), even with persistent code and lag problems?". The results were completely surprising. Every response received was in favour of subscribing to an ORPG, regardless of what state the code was in (within reason naturally). It seems the ORPG lot are a tolerant bunch!

This month we ask "Which do you consider more in a multiplayer game - co-op mode or deathmatch?". Email your answers to ngn@pcpowerplay.next.com.au. Results to be published in Issue #40.





Online RPG News

EverQuest

www.everquest.com

EverQuest was released in Australia, finally! Check the review starting on page 88 for more on our thoughts on the game.

Meanwhile, we've been playing it non-stop. With tight networking code, EverQuest plays beautifully from our wondrous shores (shame the same can't be said about inconsistent performance of UO). But the news gets better still. We've heard whispers that local servers may be set up in Australia in the near future. Even with a generous helping of hiccups in regards to gameplay, EverQuest's future seems very promising.

Ultima Online

www.owo.com

New "patch"!

Funny though, that this patch isn't included on the patch-server and auto-patched on the game's start-up. It should be a mandatory thing. The changes it makes to the game are some of the best to hit UO in the last year.

The changes are as follows

- Client 37c
- Coloured lighting
- Optimized 3D terrain rendering
- Improved drawing code



Ultima Online

- Shaded fonts
- Improved memory usage, reduced CPU overhead

New UO.CFG options
ColoredLighting=on

-Turns on coloured lighting, setting to off uses the old white lighting

ShadedFonts=on

-Shades non-unicode fonts, setting to off draws them normally"

While the improved memory usage, drawing code and 3D terrain rendering is enough to have some people jumping for joy (especially those with lower-end systems), it's the coloured lighting bit that's really set the UO community abuzz with excitement.

There's the obvious enhancement to the overall atmosphere that comes with different coloured pyro-technics, especially in dungeons and when casting spells. But with the coloured lighting (and this patch), comes a new dedication to light pitch. Gone is the representation of night by a slightly dimmer game screen. Now, night time is DARK. Those candles and torches (which are usually RPG/adventure essentials) which were completely useless prior to this patch are now prized items. More than anything else, this

new night time effect will alter the way the game is played. Will it offer new and exciting ways of co-existing in Britannia, or will it force the majority of players to stay indoors during the game's night-cycle, taking part in the mundane "house-keeping" aspect of the game? We'll keep you posted on the players response.

Current Game Versions

Blood 2 - 2.1

Quake 2 - 3.21

Half-Life - 1.0.1.0*

Quake3Arena Test - 1.05*

Unreal - 2.24

Sin - 1.05*

Shogo - 2.2

Starsiege Tribes - 1.03

* changed in last month

Essential Online Gaming Files

MPU - www.mpu.com.au

ACGP - www.acpg.com.au

Multiplay - www.multiplay.com.au

Wireplay - www.wireplay.com.au

mIRC - www.mirc.co.uk

ICQ - www.icq.com

Gamespy - <http://www.gamespy.com>

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WEBSTALK

Golly, there's a lot of stuff out there...

SITE OF THE MONTH

SKINZ.ORG:

www.skinz.org

If you are looking for a skin, you have come to the right place. Every type, from Winamp to Half-Life, they're all there, in massive quantities. There are thousands of free skins to download and it's all nice and easy to navigate around, simply choose the type of skin you're after, be it from Quake to ICQ Plus and cycle through the skins until you find a cool one. The only problem with this amazing web resource is that for some categories there are five hundred plus skins, and each page of five skins takes some time to load. They probably should have used thumbnail pictures or something, and cut out the dodgy ones. Anyway, if you can hack that, Skinz.org is definitely the place for all your skinning needs.

Site Design: ★★★★★

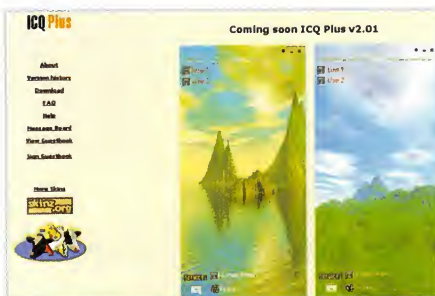
Content: ★★★★★



ICQPLUS

www.icqplus.com

ICQ Plus is a very nifty little add-on for ICQ99 which allows you to use Plugins, Skins and Soundscapes, much like Winamp but obviously for ICQ. ICQ is a great utility in itself, but that same old "uh-oh" sound can get a little bit monotonous some times ICQ plus definitely makes it a much "nicer" program to use, with its pretty pictures and sounds. This is a program for people who want everything customised to the max. The website is quite simple to use and you can be



running ICQ Plus in almost no time at all. It's not the most descriptive site but it gets the job done, great content however.

Site Design: ★★★★★

Content: ★★★★★



NEWCASTLE GAMER'S LEAGUE

newcastlegamers.com

A couple of months back we featured MPU as a place to go if you want some LAN action, well that's all well and good if you live in Sydney, but what if you don't? Well we're going a little bit up the coast to sunny Newcastle where you can find the Newcastle Gamer's League. Basically they offer similar a service for people to bring their PCs along and have cool multi day LAN Parties in and around Newcastle. The ultimate plan of this group is to hold a LAN every second weekend, meaning there is always something to do when you just can't watch another five minutes of Wide World of Sports on a Saturday afternoon. As an added bonus this site is very well maintained, head on over and join in with the fun.

Site Design: ★★★★★

Content: ★★★★★



OFFICIAL WARTORN SITE

www.wartorn.com

Wartorn looks to be one of the best upcoming RTS games around, and for once the official site is the place to be for all the latest news. This site has piles of screenshots to stand in awe of, not to mention comprehensive news from the programmers themselves and an active Message Board. In addition to this you can also sign up to be a beta tester, meaning you'll be able to play this fantastic game before almost everyone else! You can't go wrong, did I mention Wartorn was made by Eyst, an inspiring Australian games developer? Support local industry, get into Wartorn, you won't be disappointed.

Site Design: ★★★★★

Content: ★★★★★



AUSTRALIAN SIM RACERS

<http://racers.qgl.org/>

Australian gaming sites continue to infiltrate the net. This month our favourite is Australian Sim Racers, run by the ultra-enthusiastic 'Carn Rat' ('Carnivorous Rat' yes yes...). News is updated daily, and Carn has the complete collection of patches and demos for all serious racing sims.

Carn is also not afraid to lower himself to the gutter levels of arcade racers, so while the priority is hardcore racing, fans of pretty colours and powerups are catered for too. Another bonus is that this site regularly posts news of upcoming LAN and online tournaments - most useful considering how difficult it usually is to get online racing organised.

Site Design: ★★★★★

Content: ★★★★★

Rod S. Campbell

spoonman@next.com.au, <http://surf.to/spooney>

READER'S SITE

DARK JUSTICE

www.mania.com.au/~grahark/darkjustice/

This month our site comes from Manic Mark Douglas, and he's put together a very cool site which is totally devoted to Batman and Spawn. He has quite a good deal of info relating to all the latest happening in both fields, and since they both have new movies coming up it's important to have all the info in one place, this could well be it. Mark has done a lot of work in his site design and images which just look cool. He has also amassed a download section full of good stuff. If you're a fan of either series you could do a lot worse than visit Dark Justice, good design and relevant content.

Site Design: ★★★★★

Content: ★★★★★





AN APOLOGY

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

Directsoft Pty Ltd wishes to apologise to all PC Gamers who have yet to hear, of what is sure to be, one of this years "Games of the Year".

We feel that the enormous task of ensuring all PC Gamers hear about this great product is greater than even **our** marketing team can handle. As such, we are truly upset that some PC Gamers will miss out on what can only be described as a truly remarkable gaming experience.

"Hidden & Dangerous" takes place during World War II. The story begins in 1943 and, provided that you choose the correct course of action, you can get to the end of the war in 1945. The player's task is to lead a small group of Allied soldiers (up to 4 people) who carry out difficult missions deep in enemy territory. Missions take place in six different localities.

"Hidden & Dangerous" is an action/real-time strategic game, containing a combination of non-traditional features. Plentiful new features and stunning true 3D graphics give the game original form and dynamic pace. The story is imaginative and full of reversals, and forces the player to think ahead at all times.

"Hidden & Dangerous" is simply not a game about blindly bursting into a room and shooting at anything that moves, it is about so much more. We are convinced that "Hidden & Dangerous" will make it to the top of this year's all time greats in the action/real-time strategy games category.

Once again our sincere apologies to all those who miss out.

Bruce Wilson
Managing Director
Directsoft Pty Ltd
A Take 2 Interactive Company

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>The Colorado shootings and video games<

Thanks to recent events in the United States, game violence is back in the spotlight whether we like it or not. Politicians, journalists, moralists, psychologists, and other concerned groups have spent weeks attempting to apportion much of the blame for these incidents on the games industry. As people who have actually spent time playing games, we here at PCPP haven't much time for the opinions of such self-appointed experts. "Desensitisation" is a word we've been hearing repeatedly. But what does it mean? Perhaps the most "desensitised" society is one that has banned all depictions of violence and censored anything deemed disturbing or unpleasant. We believe we need to portray these aspects of human existence in order to understand ourselves. Computer games are merely another facet of this exploration.

But that's enough from the "experts"; here's a selection of the mailbag we've received from you on this contentious issue...



Rifle in my youth

Well, we thought it had gotten a little quiet on the old censorship front. But, after watching 60 Minutes on Sunday, I guess were going to be in for another round of "The Violence in Video Games" and how they're turning the children of Australia into amoral killing machines. If you didn't catch the show, it was mostly a US show highlighting the recent tragedy in Colorado and featured an ex-marine telling us how video games - particularly Doom - were training kids to be killers. He also said that the light gun arcade coin op machines were teaching us valuable lessons in the use of firearms. I thought he was full of shit. I thought Doom and the coin-ops would teach you as much about killing as Pole Position would teach you about driving. Admittedly, I have never fired a handgun, just shot a rifle in my youth. But recoil makes a very different proposition from pulling the trigger on a light gun. Real weapons weigh a lot more than the

plastic toys gamers use and, as the honourable Ben Mansill will attest from his experience in race car driving, the reality tends to be a lot different from the simulation. The kids in the US did not practice killing people with games, they had the real thing to practice with.

I suppose the ultimate point in this useless attack on video games is that Doom didn't kill those people, Marilyn Manson's music didn't kill those people, video tapes of Natural Born Killers and The Basketball Diaries did not kill those kids. The ready availability of firearms within the US did. Video games don't kill people, guns do. The US, being as gun-crazy as they are, will probably go to the lengths of putting labels on video game packaging that states "This game (along with a .45 autoloader) will turn your child into a killing machine"; and on Marilyn Manson's next album, "Listening to this CD may cause homicidal tendencies in some children", but they will not do a damn thing about the guns. Sorry, don't want

be doing a gun-control letter, I want to just say that, of course, I think it's incredibly stupid to lay blame for these tragedies on video games or music.

Benjamin Bate
Email

Worthy scapegoat

First of all I want to express my condolences to all the helpless victims of the school shooting in Littleton, Colorado. This was a tragedy that could have been avoided. What I want to write about is in direct relation to the event, the press and their preoccupation with violence in computer games. As I would imagine, this would have struck a cord with the majority of us gamers. It's been all over the major media groups, newspapers, TV, magazines, radio, etc. I feel it's only in human nature to try and find something to blame when an event of this nature or a similar tragedy occurs. But, to me, the press using games such as Doom, that they claim to 'train' the user to shoot people down, is a knee-jerk

reaction of finding the most shock worthy scapegoat and slandering it for all it's worth. 'Training' would be the operative word here, I mean, running down a school corridor with a keyboard and mouse in hand whilst touching boxes of ammo to re-arm your trusty BFG does seem like a realistic, life-like occurrence that you're trusty copy of DOOM would train you for... I think... hmmm.

Upon closer inspection, I think we will find that a variety of factors led to the eventual breakdown of the two killers' moral compasses. No single element can be responsible for this tragedy. There are many issues at work here and many other questions to ask, including how the two killers could have gotten their hands on so many weapons - a question that begs to be answered, but has so far been paid too little attention. It is ridiculous to pin all the blame on games, especially when more obvious culprits exist.

Tool199
Email



Reclining psychologist

Over the past few days, America has begun the search for something blameworthy in the wake of the recent sad news from Colorado. This may well be an important exercise; reflection and soul-searching in response to grief could bring about a new awareness of the direction Western society is headed. It also amounts to an opportunity for the less rational hordes to indulge in some random finger-pointing. As I write, the first news report which directly targeted computer games as some source of the Colorado evil was aired (I saw it on SBS - I can only guess what the commercial stations are showing). The report consisted of some generic condemnations of computer games by a reclining psychologist, a lot of hyperbole to the effect that one of the killers was an avid Doom player, and an obligatory 30-second display of someone slowly walking through a Doom level with the left-mouse-button held down. As a gamer, proudly bearing the marks of addiction we're all so

familiar with, my immediate verbal reaction was along the lines of: "That's a load of bollocks." And it is, really. It is a view being expressed by some of America's loudest voices simply to distract themselves and their cohorts from the sobering truth that the fault lies with them, and not with the closest scapegoat to hand.

However (and this will be a very unpopular 'however'), despite the lack of cogency in the arguments, there may well be some real point to be made about the effects of certain roles played in certain games upon unstable minds. I know this is resurrecting a too-often-flogged dead horse at PCPP. But when I reflected on the accusations made about Doom (significant also as the first massively popular FPS), I had to admit that in my view the object of that game (in single-player mode) could encourage delusions in an unstable mind. Try this exercise: forage about for your old copy of Doom now, load it up and choose the easiest skill setting in single-player. You wander about,

trying to find the most powerful weapon, and along the way you take out sprites with such low-level AI that your activity is closer to a massacre than a pitted battle. As in many FPS games, your greatest concern is economy of ammunition spent, not fear of an opponent. (Incidentally, I'm not convinced that this holds true for most FPS multiplayer modes, such as deathmatch, for various reasons.) Now, upon stable minds (as possessed by the overwhelming majority of gamers), the impact of this activity just does not rank on any scale, surely.

To be perfectly honest, I think the entertainment of FPS games is pretty similar to the satisfaction a child gets from smashing up his/her Lego blocks. Getting the chance to be destructive occasionally without breaking anything important is a natural, non-deviant human desire. On unstable minds - minds that may sometimes blur reality and virtuality, minds inclined towards fantasising atrocity, and minds without a fully-devel-

oped awareness of the importance of life - games which reward the player entirely for their destructive prowess could well have some non-trivial impact. Not as the source of the insanity, but certainly as a catalyst to that end. I want game developers and particularly game designers to start to acknowledge that whilst games do not inherently cause desensitisation in the player, there are some individuals for whom some types of gaming could inspire/encourage unacceptable, even evil behaviour. It is pleasing to see some indication of this already.

I think responsible gamers (as consumers) should also be willing to draw a line somewhere on the matter of violence in games. Not because we believe all the bollocks propounded by reclining experts on telly, but simply out of respect for the fact that some people exist who are more susceptible to potential influences than we are.

Joseph Pearson
Email



American. One clown

I recently had the misfortune to view a 60 Minutes special on how violent videogames were the cause of the latest redneck-kid-goes-silly-with-the-9-milli tragedy in the United States. I have one word to describe the theory of videogames causing kids to become murders: bollocks. Gotta give 60 Minutes their props though, they went out and did some major research into this story. First of all, they didn't use shots of the old favourite, Doom, to highlight their argument. No sir, they somehow got their hands on a copy of Doom 2. That's right, Doom PART TWO, which is the industry standard when you're talking about first-person shooters. They must have some pretty thick warez/ internet connections to get a copy of that game. Some of the Americans on the show were about as retarded as... your typical American. One clown said that some nutcase shot most of his victims in the head from long range and, of course, he honed these skills playing violent games (like the AWESOME DOOM 2!). Okay, fair enough, except for the fact that if these guys learnt their shooting skills from Doom, they wouldn't be able to aim up or down. And I guess these kids bought their guns on the day they committed these crimes - as if they would have used them before they killed people. Anyway, I must be off. I managed to purchase a

rocket launcher down at the fruit shop this afternoon so I've gotta go home and practice my Quake rocket jumps so that I can then go out and perform some sick rocket jump dunks down at my local basketball court. Need to find my red armour and 100 health first though.

Ewan Corness
Parramatta, NSW

Dark day for gamers

I was very disturbed by something I saw on the news the other day. A family was suing a video games company because they believed it caused their son to murder eight people. This follows on from smokers suing tobacco companies over their addiction. What is happening to our world? Over 99% of people know the difference between right and wrong, and aren't influenced by movies and computer games. It is this other minority that causes all the uproar. These people were either going to commit the crime anyway, and decided to use something they saw in a game or on TV. Or, they are mentally ill, in which case the mental health system is to blame, not the games companies. If funding for the mental health system was up to scratch, these people would be found BEFORE they harmed anyone. If they win this court case, video games companies will start spending their time making sure they aren't going to get

sued over their game, rather than improving the gameplay. It will be a dark day for gamers everywhere if this starts to happen. Here's hoping that the case gets thrown out of court.

Andrew Barrow
Email

A videogame habit

Sorry 'bout this, but I'm going to get all politically militant any second now as, once again, violence in entertainment media (especially video games) has come under attack. I mean, it's all quite logical really, a bunch of adolescents go on a murderous rampage through a high school and so we immediately ask what films they've been watching and whether they play games down at their local video arcade. Now stay with me and I'll talk you through this amazing piece of logic: (1) School kids killed some people; (2) There are killings in movies and videogames; (3) School kids watch movies and play videogames. TaDaa! Simple piece of deduction, how can you argue against such implacable evidence. Hmm, let me see, well there is a particularly specific and technical word that describes this type of argument... F*CKEDUP! Am I the only one who wonders how the hell a bunch of kids were able to acquire a complete bloody arsenal of weapons, store them at home without anyone (especially their parents) noticing? These boys were just another bunch of "nobody loves us

everybody hates us" adolescents that had a beef with the world. The only difference between them and every other kid in the world that has ever suffered from teenage angst is that they were armed to the friggging teeth. These kids had problems, as sad and simplistic as it may seem, the whole bloody mess was likely nothing more than an attention seeking attempt to be remembered, to show they existed and could have an effect. You don't get those problems from playing games or watching a movie, you get those problems from the way you are raised and from a society which values attractiveness, popularity and money above all else. Apparently, according to Mr Clinton, violence in the entertainment media is desensitising us to violence in real life. Videogames and movies are just easy targets for a government looking to associate blame with anything or one other than themselves or their voters. People don't mug others because they saw it in a film, they do it because they need the money and you can be pretty sure it's not to support a videogame habit. Leave games and films alone, games are for fun, entertainment and the challenge and, if a film seems a bit close to the bone and dangerous, more often than not it's actually reflective of society and therefore worth watching as maybe we can see what really needs to change.

James
Email

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I ate cheese

I have to tell you that you have got a great mag, but there is a bit of a letdown. In PCPP #36 (I think) in the letters section, you printed a whole lot of useless letters. Then you just payed them out. What the hell is the point?! Print letters that are useful next time! That's about it. You know, I might send in a freak of the month entry. I've always wanted to see that come back. And tell everybody about the time I ate cheese with butter spread over it. Bye!

Little

Email

Ironie, isn't it, readers?

You say a joke

PC PowerPlay, you are hypocrites. You say you are against pirating? In PCPP #37 the Overlord says that PCs are better than consoles because there are console emulators for use on the PC. You say a joke but make no attempt to say that this is in fact PIRATING. So next time someone complains about pirating, and you say "Yes, we sympathise with you", STOP LYING!. I'm surprised and disappointed that you printed the letter. By doing so you have

encouraged pirating. You may as well put the web address of the emulators in Webtalk.

John Stone

Email

No matter how hard you pretend they don't exist, emulators won't go away. While we will never condone their use, we cannot ignore them either.

Mr. Do was a hit

Emulators were brought up by "The Overlord" (hmm... that'd be a self-appointed title then?) in PCPP #37. But, while he raved about N64 emulators, he didn't really say why emulators are so much fun. You see, N64 and Playstation emulators are relatively new, and they play the new games. While this can be fun (I recently rented a copy of Time Crisis and played to my heart's content) there is a lot more fun to be had with emulators. The emulators like MAME are where the true joy lies. MAME emulates arcade classics, so you can have an absolute wow of a time blasting through "Mr. Do", "Nibbles", "Zaxxon". The advantage of old games is the tiny ROM's (51 kb). But you still have the same classic with the same graphics and sound

and EVERYTHING! I heartily recommend these games and emulators to anyone. I wasn't even born when Mr. Do was a hit, and I can play Half-Life at 60 fps if I want, but true joy is a mixture of both. Old games rule man!

Sadistic Chicken

Email

For the ultimate old school gaming experience, PCPP recommends Qix, Gyruss and Robotron.

Willing to fork

I have been collecting your magazine since #1 and have never felt the need to write in - until now. Contrary to "Anonymous" prediction, in PCPP #34, of 3dfx soon becoming a monopoly, I think that they have backed themselves into a very dangerous corner from which they are likely to crash and burn (hopefully). Or at least learn a huge lesson in humility (also good). The reasons being this: 3dfx have forsaken the hardcore gamer, opting instead to jump on the OEM bandwagon. Now I ask you, who else but a hardcore gamer is willing to fork out an extra \$400 on a computer for a Voodoo 3 card?

Furthermore, there is no chance in hell 3dfx are going to take on both Diamond and Creative and come out on top. With the power Creative and Diamond wield when it comes to OEM products (e.g. sound cards) on major PC labels like IBM and HP we will shortly see some definite activity on their behalf. Up till now I haven't even discussed the important stuff, the quality of the cards themselves. Yes, Voodoo 3 may be up to four times faster than its predecessor, but 3Dfx are missing out on two very important facts. One, the entire reason for the conception of 3D cards was to deliver superior image quality at high speeds (16 bit colour just doesn't cut it in comparison to 24 bit.) Two, the user will need a superhero of a ninja machine to make full use of its power due to the bottle necks the CPU imposes. 3dfx have placed themselves in a do or die position. We can soon expect a super marketing campaign, now that they have gained an allegiance with Gateway and Dell, in order to compensate for the short comings of their card.

John Spy

Email

Remember, the capability of the

human eye is only finite. The difference in image quality between 16 and 32-bit is barely perceptible.

Running around gobbling

Not that I want to disagree with Dane Mcoll from PCPP #35, who stated that "games have almost reached their limits", but I am afraid I must - and vehemently at that! It's all about innovation and new concepts that haven't been seen before. Look at what 3D acceleration has done for the visual appeal of games. And what about the enemy AI? There is no doubt they are getting smarter and smarter with every release proving harder and harder to beat. So what do we have to look to for the future? And is it just shooting bad-dies in Space Invaders? Not on your life! In games NOW we fight for the freedom of universes and trudge to the will of oppressive overlords, we fly into blazing dog fights high above the earth and create theme parks with thrills and spills, we control worlds and lives at the whim of our fingertips and we race across alien landscapes that turn out to be nothing more than the kitchen table, we trek beneath the depths to explore new existence and we seek to soar over lands on magical carpet rides, we control armies in battle and we build commerce to crush our financial enemies, we create train lines to move our industry and we line up heads in scopes with fingers tightening on triggers, we race at breakneck speeds down tarmac tracks and settle for that perfect tee shot hoping for par, we crash upon open deserts astride howling trail-bikes and we save the lives of doomed races from oblivion, we rescue damsels in distress from hoarding dragons and we rest a moment to bandage our bleeding wounds, we line up our tanks on enemy troops and run hospitals with efficiency in the face of laughable adversity, and lastly but far from leastly we...just...play...

I can't wait for the future of gaming and I want it NOW! I look towards the future of gaming with a somewhat drooling maniacal glee which my wife can never hope to understand.

Glenn Martin
Canberra

We look forward to a gaming future that your wife actually can understand. Wouldn't that be even better?



JOLT COLA LETTER OF THE MONTH
A CASE OF THE GOOD STUFF FOR THE LETTER
THAT SAYS IT BEST

Instead of a Mouse

I feel you are getting a bit hypocritical on your views on PlayStation and its games. You gave the RPG Final Fantasy 7 a good score of 90% and you also gave TOCA 94%. Both these games are available on the PSX, while FF7 was born on it. However, in PCPP #37, your editor, Mr Mansill, declared that your staff had not enjoyed any games on the PSX for more than a few minutes! (*except me!* -Malcolm) Now come on! According to your scoring system, a game which you enjoy for only a few minutes warrants a 0%-40% rating. However, you gave FF7 90%! I'm pretty sure using a joypad instead of a mouse wouldn't pull a score down 50%! Even the Oracle declared that FF7 was a 'truly brilliant game' and I've also noticed that one of your staff is playing FF8. Games such as Forsaken, TOCA, FIFA 99, TOCA 2, Colin McRae Rally, Tomb Raider and Need For Speed 2 are all available on the PSX and all got 90%+. Does being based on the PSX bring a game down a lot? I really hope not. In fact, I would love to see PSX games such as Gran Turismo, Tenchu and Metal Gear Solid come to the PC - officially, of course. If you don't want these games to be brought to the PC just because they're console games, then I'm very sorry to say that your prejudiced views are quite wrong.

Jim Teh

Email

Don't worry, Jim, Metal Gear Solid IS coming to PC sometime this year and, rest assured, at least two PCPP staffers are awaiting its arrival eagerly.

Special of \$74.95

I, like many others of you in the gaming community, as I can see from the vast amount of letters concerning this subject, am fed up with games costing so much. I work in a large retail store so I see many of the new games come in and every time I am disappointed to see the prices are still \$89.95, \$79.95 or a special of \$74.95. It's a bloody joke. The game companies say that it's because of the piracy and lost sales. Now, I don't know about anyone else, but many of my friends, if they have a game burnt, it's just because it's there to burn. They weren't going to buy it anyway cause it's too expensive. I know that people at my school are already taking "orders" for Quake 3: Arena. I was asked, but refused simply for the fact that I know I'll like it and want to BUY the game and support id software. Therefore game companies, I think, are cutting off many sales by making their games so expensive and maybe they should go the long way around and reduce RRP's to increase sales. Sure they won't make as much profit from each copy, but they'll make it up in the increased number of sales.

Andreas
Email

Big-name, well-off

I have to admit that I do own a couple of pirated games. There is a reason for this, being your typical young, natural light-fearing gamer, I have little time for a job and therefore no money to fund my gaming needs. People say, and I agree with them, that there is nothing like opening the box of a legitimate copy of a game and going through all the bits and pieces and then finally playing your game, but it is rather expensive. Unfortunately it is so much cheaper, and only slightly less satisfying, to get yourself a pirate copy for only \$30, compared to \$80 plus. I think it's up to the big-name, well-off publishers and distributors to lower their prices, and make people buy legitimate copies again. If they lowered their prices they would get more business, which means more money, which means the developers don't have to be ripped off. I mean wouldn't all you guilty-feeling, pirate copy-buying rapsallions out there feel better if you could actually afford a game at

some time other than Christmas and birthdays? I know I would.

Santa Claus
Email

Clearly greed is a major factor on all sides of the piracy argument. Here are two more takes on the issue...

Placed under pressure

In response to Jamie Richter's letter "Too Expensive", I'd like to offer a slightly different slant on the issue. Let's take a game, one of my personal favourites, Starcraft. Now, I watched the development of this game over close to two and a half years. This was Blizzard's most promising title and so they invested a huge amount of time and resources into its creation. Games are made by teams of extremely talented people - the artists, the programmers, the designers - all of which have to be paid. Then there's the PR people, the advertising and managerial staff along with a hundred or so other smaller positions within the company. All these people have to be paid, too. Yes, Starcraft turned out to be a huge success, but only after two and a half years of solid work. Software companies are literally made or broken by the success of their software. If the money invested is not recovered quickly, then bills go unpaid, resources are stretched and Blizzard falls behind on the release of their next game. I agree that computer games are expensive, but if nothing else, it should make the buyer more discerning in the titles they purchase (I myself only know of a handful of exceptional titles released since the beginning of this year for example). Piracy, in my opinion, is a prime example of "shooting oneself in the foot". Every time someone "steals" a game, the developers of these titles are placed under pressure, as this is one less title sold. I personally don't believe that lowering the price of computer games would have any affect on piracy - \$70 is still a lot compared to free.

Greg Dawson
Email

Singing and Flowers

So, you wanna know why games are dark? I remember the first time I played Diablo. It was late at night and I was the only one awake. The intro was especially cool, but the real thrill came when I reached the church and found the wounded townsman. The soft glow coming



from the doorway of the church illuminating the scene so I could see his mangled body lying on the grass. His begging of me to avenge the deaths of his family gave me the shivers. I took a step in the church and went down to the first level... Now if we picture that scene in the daytime with the sun shining and the birds singing and flowers all over the grass it kinda loses the thrill. Games like that make you peer closely at the screen, they make you listen to footsteps and they make you lean over to the side in your chair to see what's around that corner - we've all done it (Especially with the lean option in Thief - Ed). It makes the game feel real, as if you really are that knight set to rid the lands of all evil, as if you are that space marine set to save earth, as if you did just walk through that moon gate to another world. It all comes down to effect. If the game doesn't suck you in, you don't have fun - and really that's what games are for, aren't they? Also take into consideration that gamers are often on their PCs at the darkest hours of the morning/night, so dark things are heaven on sore, bloodshot, dry, aching, malfunctioning eyes. And there you have it, my friend. The darkness is not there to hinder us, it's there to hide us, to make us feel safe and loved, to cover the errors in our society, to take the pain and sorrow and also, most importantly... It just looks cool.

Gjsmith
Email

So, you weren't a fan of Croc, then?

It simply boggles

This sort of proceeds from Jamie Richter's letter in PCPP #37. His

point is that CDR's are just too *\$*&% expensive. Guess what? CDR's seem to be expensive ONLY IN AUSTRALIA. I don't condone piracy either, however I do think that local retailers should take a tactic from Asian retailers and start narrowing the price gap between the real stuff and the knock-offs. I recently travelled to Singapore and Manila over the past six weeks. Lo and behold, reputable shops were selling newly released games for 30-40% LESS than Sydney prices. I bought my copy of Civ: Call to Power for \$AUS 55.00 in a shop called Wizard in Singapore. To add insult to injury, if you check the Civ:CTP box out, you'll see that the product is "Made in Australia". It simply boggles the imagination that an Australian manufacturer can ship a product seven hours away by plane to a number of Asian cities, account for tariffs and provide for the retail margin with the Asian retailer yet still offering a much better price. My lesson learned: buy Australian OVERSEAS (check out international sellers on the web). You'll get the same great quality, at better prices. We'll still be supporting the local PC gaming industries, but not the retailers. If it's the publishers who're setting this convoluted pricing, I think they should look at this newfangled invention called the internet where we can canvas prices of their products in other markets.

Outraged
Email

Activision locally manufacture most of their games, which means Australian Civ: CTP is Aussie made, and overseas product is the same. As for the price difference... Write to John Howard.



For putting out

I would just like to wish all of you happy people who work at PC PowerPlay a very happy 3rd Birthday. You should be very proud of yourselves for putting out such a great magazine which I can't wait to be delivered to my house every month for my monthly gamer's boost. I'm sure there are many birthdays to come and maybe a few more Magazine of the Year's.

**Sarah
Email**

Aw, shucks...

Quake, Quake, Quake

Well, I am going to say something that is going to piss a lot of people off, but it's true so here we go. I am wondering if Quake is the only first-person shooter available? No? Why is it that every time I get my issue of PC PowerPlay and your little sister mag it is all we hear about? Quake this, Quake that? We have Half-Life and Unreal and Sin, all of which I own a copy of. I also own a copy of Quake, but not Q2. I know someone is about to get on their PC and type an email calling me a whole lot of abusive things but, before you do, do some homework and you will find I am right. I have just got sick and tired of picking up your mag and your

little sister mag and reading Quake, Quake, Quake.

**Richard
Email**

We did some homework, Richard, and discovered that Half-Life, Unreal and Thief all scored higher than Quake and Quake 2. A quick poll in the office revealed that, while some people love id's game, others could care less.

Glued to your eye

Just a quick whinge... What is it with bloody 'lens-flare' in games these days? If you're a human being, try this simple test: Stand out in an open field on a bright, sunny day and turn around 360 degrees. Ascertain whether or not you got lens-flare. Did it happen?..... No! The fact of the matter is that the bulk of the games we play are in the 'first person'. If you were running round with a camera glued to your eye then I could understand the 'lens-flare' carry-on, but in real life it ain't there! Wake up to yourself programmers and drop the lens-flare stuff. It's not only unnecessary, it's wasting video memory!!

Scott Surridge

beautiful, downtown Dapto

But - dammit! - it still looks cool...

I completely agree

I recently read a newspaper article stating that certain schools

around Australia were planning on implementing a computer game "literacy" program. The proposed program consisted of students playing certain games (i.e Tomb Raider, Abe's Oddysee) and then studying the underlying themes and meanings within each. I recall in a previous editorial Ben's wish for subliminal messages in games to be kept at a minimum. I completely agree. Some game companies may take note of programs such as this and gear their games towards the educational needs of schools - this would be a disaster for the general game playing public. Programs such as this are likely to create games-obsessed students who have a bad attitude towards school work. While no normal student is going to complain about playing games in class, school is for work, and games are for recreation. Games are for fun, not intensive study. Let's keep it that way.

**Rowan Fraser
South Oakleigh, VIC**

Just as today's students study novels, poetry, and increasingly film and TV, future students will no doubt do likewise with computer games. Why are games just "for fun"? Surely every aspect of our culture is worthy of serious investigation.

In the head

Sally McInerney in PCPP #37 is totally wrong. I mean absolutely and positively wrong. In the head and in her letter. GoldenEye wasn't the first with location damage. It was Doom. Yes, the CLASSIC GAME DOOM! So go and get your facts straight, Sally. Also, Macs will not be the latest and greatest because 1) they suck and 2) they don't have the most software available. That is why Pentiums and the like rule - available software. I agree NRL and EA should make a new footy game with all the new teams and I would be one of the first in line for it. The game should also let you include .wav files for made up players like yourself or your best friends.

**Shane Plumb
Thirroul, NSW**

Location damage? Doom?! Are you mad?

IllKikUInDaNuts4It

Hehe. Just before I wrote a letter in the tips section in PCPP #37 explaining how gamers can have a safe life outside their gaming temples. Now I will show you lot of non-gamers :) how to survive the gamers world. Sure, you might spend the entire life of yours playing sport, studying or rarely even try to shoot someone in the head for no reason at all. Well now you can... in Quake hehe...

1. You find a new computer, it's the worlds beast and the fastest on earth (I'm talking about the fastest at the time, though :P). Then suddenly, another person buys it from the last stock. Go kick him in the nuts for it...

2. Being new to computer games? No sweat, all you have to do is play the game and when you're frustrated go kick him in the nuts for it.

3. Some cool funny faces you can do on-line. :) :P :) :P :) :P ÛÛ = eyes hehe. C'mon people! GET CREATIVE!

4. Abbr. you will find on-line. BRB = be right back. BBL = be back later.

BBS = be back soon. and WTF= ummmmm... a more offensive way of saying "Oh darn" hehe I'll let you guess this one.

IllKikUInDaNuts4It = I have no idea what this means...

**Yun Khang Lai
Email**

PS. I do take me medication. LOL Sorry, Yun, but if you keep writing letters like that we'll have to kick you in the nuts...

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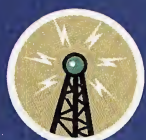
PLAYSTATION



MAC



PC-CDROM



CHAT



SEGA



ARCADE



NINTENDO 64

COMPETITIONS

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

6 COPIES OF THE GAME + 6 POSTERS



Quake schmake. Why wait for Quake 3: Arena when Unreal Tournament has it all - NOW? In between recovering from E3, making this here mag, playing everything and about 57 million other healthy activities, we enjoy a game of Unreal Tournament, we do. So will you, we reckon. That's our job, you see, to reckon this, reckon that... Ever wanted to wake up one morning and not give a damn about anything? "So, Ben, what's Baby Slaughter IV: Placenter like?". "LIKE, I CARE?!... Unreal Tournament though, let's talk about that, and you..."

Q. What kind of helicopter was featured on the cover of Abba Arrival?

EPISODE 1: RACER

6 COPIES OF THE GAME

Hey! Wow! There's a new Star Wars movie! Can you believe it? Too good! But what's with this "Episode 1" thing? Shouldn't it be Episode 4? Can someone please explain this? No wait! Don't! That's not the competition question silly, that's the bit coming up next...

Q. To date, who has played Darth Vader in the Lucasfilm movies?



WHERE TO SEND

Write the answer, along with your name and address on the back of an envelope.
Tip: Don't forget to put the competition name on the front of the envelope.

MECHWARRIOR 3

6 COPIES OF THE GAME + T-SHIRT & MOUSE MAT



Plausibility be damned! 'Cool' outranks 'sensible' every time, and you'll find no better example of this axiom than the Mechwarrior. Ever been cowtipping?

Scoring much higher in the sensible stakes is Tania from MicroProse. So clued in is this marvel of PR that the 6 copies of their new Mechwarrior 3 hit our desks before we even thought to call up and beg for them. What's more, there are 6 T-Shirts and 6 mouse mats too. Each winner gets one of each. Enter! Enter!

Q. Which, in your opinion, is the least feasible sci-fi combat unit and why?

EIDOS F1 RACING

6 COPIES OF THE GAME

Formula 1, of the modern era, has just a couple of problems that need fixing. Firstly there's Murray Walker, the bloke that excitedly points out stuff a few minutes after the rest of the world has noticed it, and secondly, the outrageous Ferrari contract that is holding New Legend Eddie Irvine back from letting his spirit run free.

No real problems with the Eidos F1 game though, it's tops. So tops we need to share said topsness with you. Ozisoft kindly contributed 6 copies, yay Ozisoft.

Q. Which Formula 1 drivers career, and arm, was cut short by a helicopter crash?



All entries close August 12th. Send to:
<competition name>
PC PowerPlay
78 Renwick St
Redfern NSW 2016

ISSUE 37 WINNERS

ULTIMA ONLINE GUIDE

Q. What are the 8 virtues upon which Lord British built his vision for a Greater Britannia?

A. Honour, Humility, Valour, Compassion, Honesty, Sacrifice, Spirituality, Justice.

K Barnfarther, Box Hill VIC
S Coshiril, Currumbine WA

LARA MOUSE MATS

Q. Who did Kate Capshaw (the one that played Indiana Jones' female sidekick in The Temple of Doom) marry in real life?

A. Steven Spielberg

J Stewart, Ewumundi QLD
M McCarthy, Thornlie WA
A Ferrareso, Greenwith SA
W Bowyer, Noarunga Downs SA
C Van Der Walle, Labrador QLD
N George, Newham TAS
J McNaughton, Yeronga QLD
T Carter, Hastings VIC
B Murray, Wynyard TAS
S Coshiril, Currumbine WA
M Ielari, Plympton SA
J Marnoy, Glenorchy TAS
D Quein, East Keilor VIC
N Taylor, Glenorie NSW
J Douglas, Brunswick VIC

PCPP's 3RD BIRTHDAY COMPS

(3 x SWATCH WATCHES)

Q. Who was on the cover of PCPP #1?

A. Duke Nukem

P Watts, Carseldine QLD
N Piper, Bateau Bay NSW
A Ficarra, Chatswood NSW

TOCA 2

Q. Who is this famous TOCA driver?

A. Nigel Mansell

P Thompson, Toowoomba QLD
D Bergman, Concord NSW
T John, East Keilor VIC
C Martin, Petrie QLD
G Charlton, Booragoon WA
T Russell, Mt Druitt NSW

FIGHTER SQUADRON

Q. What was the standard armament for the Focke Wulf 190-D9?

A. 2 x 13mm MG 131 machine guns in the cowlings

+ 2 x 20mm MG 151 cannons in the wings

+ 1,100lb bomb load.

D Sperling, Kyabram VIC
T Dolan, Lucindale SA
S Drisall, Aberdeen NSW
M Macdonald, Fishing Pt NSW
S Coshiril, Currumbine WA
A Graham, Bassendean WA

STARSIEGE

Q. What is the name of the new American Space Shuttle currently in development?

A. X-33, X-34 'Venturestar'

M Ielari, Plympton SA
J McNaughton, Yeronga QLD
L Jane, East Keilor VIC
N George, Newham TAS
R Brockwell, Grafton NSW

ALIEN

Q. What's the name of Lt Ripley's feline sidekick in Alien?

A. Jones, or "Jonesey"

J Hogan, Leeming WA
J Douglas, Brunswick VIC
B Murray, Wynyard TAS
M Batten, Chain Valley Bay South NSW
P Sampson, Morbulk VIC

read error >

Tomb Raider 34DD

Although not displayed on the show floor at E3, we were fortunate enough to gain access to a special behind-the-scenes preview of the latest in the Tomb Raider series. Contrary to popular belief, the new title will not be called Tomb Raider 4, but rather Tomb Raider 34DD. All this was explained by an earnest chap in a trenchcoat who claimed to be Lara's agent.



PCPP: Why the name change?

AGENT: "The Tomb Raider franchise has been a great success for us, but we feel it hasn't yet fulfilled its potential. Our research has shown that Lara proved remarkably popular with female gamers, introducing many of them to gaming for the very first time. Since obviously it is in our interest to capture even more of this previously untapped share of the market, we sat down and thought about why this was the case."

PCPP: So what strategy did you come up with?

AGENT: "Well, Lara's got huge knockers, so we decided to make them even bigger. It sounds weird, I know, but there can be no other explanation. Girls like tits!"

PCPP: Uh, okay. Does this "enhancement" have any effect on the gameplay?

AGENT: "This exciting new development is in line with our vision <laughs> for a game that pushes the boundaries of realism like nothing else you've ever seen."

PCPP: So surely it would effect her ability to swim?

AGENT: "Of course, the exact wetness of her t-shirt will be calculated in accordance with the length of time spent underwater."

PCPP: And you're certain this is what girl gamers really want?

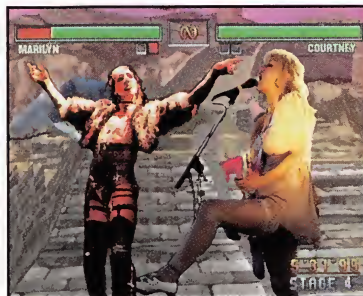
AGENT: "Definitely. Lara's a highly visible female role model and her prominence in the public eye <laughs> is something we take very seriously."

PCPP: We're sure it is. Nice speaking with you.



Marilyn vs. Courtney

Hot on the heels of the surprise announcement that Omikron would see David Bowie joining the growing ranks of pop stars to feature in a computer game, alongside the likes of Kiss, the Wu-Tang Clan and Spice Girls, comes the even more shocking news that both Marilyn Manson and Courtney Love have signed up to star in the same game! Similar in concept to Capcom's X-Men Vs Streetfighter, the Marilyn/Courtney title is a fighting game that pits two of rock's most feared personalities against each other in a brutal fight to the death.



Details are scarce at this stage, though it is thought the game will feature appropriately two-dimensional graphics. Our spies have managed to extract some confidential information regarding the game's weapons from one of the development team. Apparently, both characters will rely upon the Inflated Ego as their standard attack move, yet this is easily countered with the slightest derogatory remark.

Courtney has several individual attacks at her disposal - from the Nipple Flash and Biliious Stream of Invective (quick to execute, but inflict only mild damage) to the more lethal Ex-Boyfriend Career Suicide (in both its metaphorical and literal modes). Two of Marilyn's unique moves are known - the Simulated Fisting Attack and the Jesus Christ Pose (the latter induces a Pavlovian stampede of paroxysmic Christians to crush his opponent).

Perfect wins are rewarded with a special "fatality" move. When Marilyn triumphs, his opponent dresses up like a goth and dies of embarrassment. There's added incentive to win a bout against Courtney, too, because prolonged time in her company will cause her opponent to shoot themselves in the head.

We'll endeavour to obtain a preview copy of this truly original title in time for the next issue.

Ask Abe...

In his regular column, everyone's favourite Mudokon and Oddworld inhabitant will endeavour each month to solve all your gaming related concerns. A philosopher of great renown, Abe can also draw upon many years of first-hand experience at the forefront of the games industry. So, if you have a burning question, then just Ask Abe...

Winston Di Livio of Brunswick, Victoria writes: "Abe, I've followed your adventures since the very beginning and am in constant awe at your mental and physical prowess. Yet one thing has been consuming my mind of late. How can you talk when your lips are sewn together?"

Abe: "..."

"..."

"..."

"..."

"..."

"..."

"... I don't know..."



DESCENT

The title that took first person action gaming to new dizzying heights.

Developer: Parallax
Publisher: Interplay
Year: 1995
Requirements: 486/33,
4MB RAM

With the third iteration in the series now available, I thought it an opportune time to revisit one of my all-time favourite games - Descent. Upon its initial release, the original Descent left many gamers feeling confused. It was complicated, you see. Having only just experienced the simplistic beauty of Doom 2, the step up in manual dexterity demanded by Descent proved too much for most players. However, those who showed patience and persistence were rewarded with, for its time, the best single-player action game yet devised.

Descent rocked. Of that there can be no doubt. In fact, the entire game took place within a rock - indeed, several rocks. You played the pilot of a super lightweight and extraordinarily manoeuvrable spacecraft sent to investigate god-knows-what through a chain of mineshafts in a deep space asteroid belt. There were swarms of robot enemies to battle, hostages to inexplicably rescue and end-of-level bosses to destroy. It all made perfect sense at the time, I can assure you.

For me it's usually the narrative that generates the atmosphere necessary to keep me compelled throughout a game. No doubt there was some kind of rivetting and substantial plot to explain the reasons why these asteroids were thus infested by berserk machines, but once I began playing the game I really



could have cared less. Despite possessing no discernible or meaningful plot, few games have managed to totally and utterly immerse me in a virtual world as successfully as Descent.

It may sound boring and tedious in a "hey-ain't-technology-great" kinda way, but perhaps the main reason for Descent's supreme loveliness was that it embraced a truly 3D world like no other game had done in the

past. Each mine was a startling and dizzying arrangement of vast chambers linked by a capillary network of twisting, turning tunnels. You had to abandon any

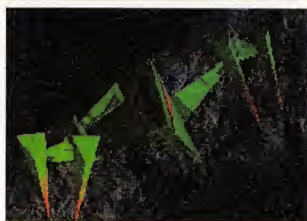
notion of what constituted a ceiling or a floor as, unlike all other 3D games, Descent delivered routes through a level that threw all conventional sense of direction out the window. That so-called Descent clone of last year, Forsaken, with its mostly tame series of corridors failed dismally in emulating the spectacular dual sensations of disorientation and claustrophobia that Descent captured with ease.

Playing it again today, the difficulty some gamers had with the complex controls is readily understandable. With both banking and strafing such integral parts of the ship movement, the typical FPS mouse/keyboard combination is inadequate. A

twin joystick setup is perhaps ideal, though the more digitally nimble player can survive with the keys alone. More debilitating to the gameplay, in the wake of recent developments in FPS mission design, are the now simplistic "find coloured keycard to open coloured door" objectives. As wonderfully realised as the level design may remain, the basic nature of the missions pale when compared to the sophisticated dynamic goals of Descent 3. But hey - that's progress for you.

The legacy of the Descent series is hard to gauge. As revolutionary as it may have seemed at the time, precious few other games have picked up on the possibilities Parallax were exploring four years ago. Descent 2 was more of the same (but better), while Descent To Undermountain was best forgotten. Aside from the hugely over-rated Forsaken, there's been nothing until last month's Descent 3 to effectively update the classic formula. In today's clone or nothing market, that makes Descent a pretty rare game. And one that ought to be cherished.

David J Wildgoose





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